

Yale Journal of Music & Religion

Volume 2

Number 2 *The Sounds of Processions*, guest edited by
Suzel Reily

Article 2

2016

Editorial

Suzel A. Reily

Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Follow this and additional works at: <http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/yjmr>

Recommended Citation

Reily, Suzel A. (2016) "Editorial," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1073>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* by an authorized editor of EliScholar – A Digital Platform for Scholarly Publishing at Yale. For more information, please contact elischolar@yale.edu.

Editorial

Suzel Ana Reily

This issue of the *Yale Journal of Music & Religion (YJMR)* is dedicated to an exploration of the “sounds of processions.” Throughout the world, devotees in a range of religions can be seen—and heard—when they take to the streets as a group in procession. While processions may take place in a wide range of places, they exist in numerous forms, a diversity consistent with the different ways in which groups across the globe—and across time—understand and relate to the sacred and to spiritual beings. Processions vary in size, in social make-up, in the trajectories they traverse, in the distances they travel such that some blur the boundaries between processions and pilgrimages, in the symbols and material objects involved, and also in the sounds and musics that accompany them. It is these differences that reveal how diverse religious communities understand the forces that shape their lives.

Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta was, perhaps, one of the first academics to acknowledge the analytic potential of processional formats for understanding social spheres.¹ He contended that such street rituals as military parades, Carnival parades, and Catholic processions constituted arenas that evince diverse aspects of Brazilian culture and society. In representing military parades, he noted that these events are marked by uniformity, order, and a vast number of soldiers and armaments; for DaMatta, military parades dramatize the might of the state, which in Brazil constitutes a power unto itself. The Carnival parade is presented as a sphere in which everyday norms are inverted and individuals are free to express their personal desires, experiencing a moment of respite from official authority, social rules and norms, and the responsibilities of daily life. Finally, the Catholic procession is an event in which the patron is brought out into the streets to bless the place and its inhabitants, uniting devotees into a community premised on a concept of family, a social network marked by benign hierarchy, respect, and mutual obligations.

While DaMatta’s typology may provide a point of departure for conceptualizing processional formats, it is worth noting that Catholic processions in Brazil display considerably more diversity than his model would suggest. For instance, when drought strikes, the agriculturalists of the small landholdings in the northeast of the country unite in a collective prayer and process through the countryside pleading with the saints in song to intercede on their behalf and send rain. Presenting themselves as humble devotees, these peasants roam through their scorched fields in the hope of gaining the empathy of divine powers, their *bendito* chants slow and mournful. This pleading is noticeable in the text of this *bendito* directed to St. Joseph.²

¹ Roberto A. DaMatta, *Carnival, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. John Drury (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991 [1979]).

² Cristina Pompa, “Leituras do ‘fanatismo religioso’ do sertão brasileiro,” *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* 69 (2004): 71–88.

Meu divino São José
 Não mate seus filhos não
 Nem de fome nem de sede
 Pela cruz que tras nas mãos

...
 Ofereço este bendito
 A meu divino São José
 Que nos dê chuva na terra
 Pela vossa santa fé

My divine St. Joseph
 Don't kill your children
 Neither from hunger or from thirst
 By the cross in your hands

...
 I offer this bandito
 To my divine St. Joseph
 Who brings water to earth
 Through your holy faith

These collective rituals of affliction³ contrast with the prototype DaMatta probably had in mind in constructing his typology, namely, the grand baroque procession with numerous litters and brass bands that many towns across Brazil still stage, particularly in the regions that flourished during the eighteenth-century mining era.⁴ While the regimented structure of the processions of the past, in which a clear protocol marking social differences was overtly dramatized in the positioning of the various social categories of the population, may be less marked now, many patron saint processions continue to evince local social hierarchies, both overtly and subliminally. As various anthropologists have argued, these processions use religion to reinforce and legitimate a particular social arrangement that privileges the wealthier members of society.⁵

During the final procession at the Festival of the Divine Holy Spirit in São Luis do Paraitinga (São Paulo State),⁶ in May 2016, for instance, a *congado*, a drum-based dance troupe made up predominantly of black day laborers, headed the entourage, alongside the litter honoring St. Benedict the Moor, a saint typically associated with the country's poorer sectors; though present, this ensemble did not perform during the procession, its dancing restricted to the streets before the grand event. Toward the back of the entourage was the brass band, whose membership was

³ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

⁴ On the Baroque processions in Portuguese America, see Maria Alice Volpe, "Irmandades e ritual em Minas Gerais durante o período colonial: O Triunfo Eucarístico de 1733," *Revista música* 1/2(1997): 6–55; Júnia Furtado, "Desfilar: a procissão barroca," *Revista brasileira de história* 17 (1997): 251–79.

⁵ See, for instance, Thomas C. Bruneau, *The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O Império em Procissão: Ritos e símbolos do Segundo Reinado* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2001); Alba Zaluar, *Os homens de Deus: um estudo dos santos e das festas no catolicismo popular* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1983).

⁶ The historic town of São Luis do Paraitinga was positioned on one of the routes to the mines from the port of Paraty; though official, the route was also commonly used for the transportation of contraband.

comprised mainly of small business owners, such as shopkeepers, truck farmers, and service providers; they paraded in their smart military uniforms, performing a string of *dobrados* (a Brazilian form of the double march), just ahead of the main grand litter devoted to the Divine Holy Spirit, patron of the festival. While the 2/4 time of the march helped propel the procession forward, the slight lilt that characterizes the *dobrado* lightened everyone's step.⁷ The *dobrado* was popularized in Brazil during the Paraguayan War (1864–1870) and would soon become the most prevalent genre used in processions accompanied by brass bands;⁸ this, surely, is because of the genre's potential to synchronize collective movement, while creating a festive, yet orderly, atmosphere.

As noted above, *congados* are frequently integrated into processions that take place during some major festivals, but they may also stage their own processions, particularly during festivals for Our Lady of the Rosary, who since colonial times has been a focus of devotion among blacks throughout the country. During these festivals, the various African-Brazilian ensembles of a town and its surrounding communities, including *congados*, *moçambiques*, *catupês*, and other such groups, process together through the very same streets as the main processions, to the deafening sound of their drums and percussion instruments. As they process they sing short repetitive *toadas* (tunes), many of which contain veiled critiques of the racial prejudice their members experience on a daily basis,⁹ while drum patters may also involve secret “drum language” that preserves ancestral knowledge, known only to the *congadeiros* (congado members).¹⁰ Yet, as Érica Giesbrecht has argued, African-Brazilian dance focuses less on a representation of slavery as a sphere of brutality and injustice; rather, it highlights the contagious exuberance of the dancing that celebrates these communities' resistance to the cruel conditions imposed on Africans and their descendants.¹¹ Yet by moving through the town center with their patron, they lay claim to their rights to traverse this space.

As these examples demonstrate, the public nature of processions, linked as they are to the moral domain of the sacred, has rendered them privileged settings for blurring the boundaries between religion and politics. In effect, processions reveal how religious communities understand power and the ownership of public space. DaMatta's representations of Brazilian processional forms draw attention to the symbols that are paraded during these events as well as to their performative practices in dramatizing the social. Yet music, while mentioned, received little elaboration in his writing. Indeed, in her overview of the sociological and anthropological

⁷ For an extended discussion of the socio-economic associations attached to the musical ensembles in São Luis do Paraitinga, see Suzel Reily, “Musical Performance at a Brazilian Festival,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 3 (1994): 1–34.

⁸ Suzel Reily, “From Processions to Encontros: The Performance Niches of the Community Bands of Minas Gerais,” in S. Reily and K. Brucher, eds., *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 99–122.

⁹ Suzel Reily, “To Remember Captivity: The Congados of Southern Minas Gerais.” *Latin American Music Review* 22/1 (2001): 4–30.

¹⁰ Glaucia Lucas, *Os sons do Rosário: o congado mineiro dos Arturos e Jatobá* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2002).

¹¹ Érica Giesbrecht, “Jongos, batuques e sambas de bumbo: dançando a memória negra de Campinas,” *Música e cultura* (online journal of the Brazilian Association for Ethnomusicology) 9 (2004); <http://musicaecultura.abetmusica.org.br/index.php/revista/issue/view/27> (accessed Sept. 16, 2016).

literature on processions, Lily Kong noted that music is rarely discussed at any length,¹² despite the fact that few processions occur without music or a recognized soundscape. Whether in the form of collective chanting or of performances by musicians specifically engaged to provide musical accompaniment for the procession, music plays a critical role in assisting the mass of people to move along their route. Indeed, many processions are propelled by such “outdoor” music as that of brass bands, drumming ensembles, or bells, which have the capacity to dominate the sonic space. As David Harnish has argued, “the more instruments and ensembles and the louder the music, the more important the procession.”¹³ Music sets the pace for the collective movement of the procession. Therefore, it plays a central role in shaping the bodily sensations and processes of embodiment that occur during collective movement through space. Moreover, music is critical to the construction of the very atmosphere of the procession; it gives these events their distinct feel, contributing significantly toward participants’ processional experiences. Paraphrasing Jamie Jones (in this issue of *YJMR*), “music makes [procession] possible.”

Clearly, processions construct unique social worlds that acknowledge and activate the sacred, but they also draw on the legitimacy of religious conviction to affirm or challenge reigning social arrangements. Through such public collective action, religious associations proclaim their beliefs and values, as they trace a meaningful trajectory through geographic space. Processions create public settings for the display of power and conceptions of social order premised on long-standing tradition, but also for the expression of ethnic and/or local identity as well as social grievances. As they parade through public space, their sounds evoke both a past that they commemorate, a present to which they continuously adapt, and a future that they aim to perpetuate or transform.

These themes are present in different ways in each of the eight contributions to this issue, which cover a range of religions, historical periods, and geographical locations. It opens with three historical studies based on European processions, encompassing the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. In “The Rogationtide Processions of Wilton Abbey,” Alison Altstatt investigates a set of recently discovered fourteenth-century manuscripts that transmit processional antiphons, litanies, and stational Masses pertaining to the annual three-day open-air Rogationtide procession performed by the nuns of Wilton Abbey, one of the wealthiest and most powerful abbeys in Britain at the time. The repertoire is directly linked to the landscape and places along the route of the procession, such that Altstatt is able to use the folios to reconstruct the trajectory the women took each day, identifying the sphere of influence of the abbey and the nature of the nuns’ relationships with the surrounding population.

Jeffrey Kurtzman’s “Civic Identity and Civic Glue: Venetian Processions of the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries” focuses on the processions of Venice, a city with a unique republican administration. Kurtzman argues that the stability of the Venetian government was at least partially due to its intense and spectacular processional displays, as can be noted from the visual

¹² Lily Kong, “Religious Processions: Urban Politics and Poetics,” *Temenos* 41/2 (2005): 225–49.

¹³ David Harnish, “The Lives of Processions in Bali and Lombok, Indonesia,” in J. Santino, ed., *Public Festivities* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, in press).

representations that depict them. The processions of Venice, Kurtzman argues, served as “living thread[s] that traced [their] path[s] through the city, knitting together its people and its geographical subdivisions.” The sounds accompanying the processions could be heard beyond their visual boundaries, thereby extending the reach of the procession to embrace those unable to view the spectacle. This argument is then skillfully demonstrated through an extended discussion of the coronation of Dogaressa Morosina Morosini Grimani in 1597, in which religion and politics overlapped, a merging of boundaries clearly evinced in the sounds that dominated the city over the four-day event. This impressive display linked Venetians not only through the trajectories of the processions, but also through the production of experiences that would be difficult to forget.

“Relics, Processions and the Sounding of Affections: Barbara Strozzi, the Archduchess of Innsbruck, and St. Anthony of Padua,” by Sara Pecknold, follows on from the previous article by speculating upon how the experience of a procession may have inspired a particular set of compositions titled *Sacri musicali affetti* by the seventeenth-century composer Barbara Strozzi, particularly the motet *Jubilemus* to St. Anthony of Padua, a saint with exceptional oratorical skills capable of evoking fervent responses from his listeners. As Venetians confronted the War of Crete, divine assistance was called upon, and a relic of St. Anthony was translated from his basilica in Padua to Venice, a magnificent display recounted in *Le grandezze di S. Antonio di Padua*, published in 1653 by Venetian senator Sertorio Orsato. This treatise makes a direct link between the sounds of the procession and the promotion of *affetti*, or religious fervor, among those who witnessed the grand event. While it is impossible to verify whether the composer watched the procession, there are definite links between her *Affetti* and Orsato’s account, suggesting a musical response to procession. The work was then dedicated to the archduchess of Innsbruck, whose confraternity involved the practice of meditative *affetti*.

The next five contributions are based on ethnomusicological field research. Katherine Brucher’s “Transforming the Everyday into the Extraordinary: Religious Processions in Portugal” serves as a bridge between the two sets of articles, as it provides insight into the legacy of grand baroque processions in southern Europe today. By viewing the procession as a “musical theology of the streets,” that is, as a context in which music integrates worldview and faith in a lived religious experience, Brucher compares four distinct processions in different Portuguese settings, looking at how feelings of community are constructed and sounded through coordinated movement in each context. To some extent the examples suggest a common structure for Catholic processions in Portugal, the main differences being their scale. However, Brucher notes, although processions may activate a common sense of religious devotion, they also mobilize local identities through their location, trajectory, participants, and musicians. Processions, therefore, are also “lived geographies.” Thus, the boundaries of a community are equally constructed through people’s diverse modes of engagement in processions and their embodied expectations of them, an issue that comes to the fore most notably when a musical theology is performed in streets where many inhabitants belong to other religions.

The diverse ways processions are experienced is also central to Jaime Jones’s “Pilgrimage and Audience on the Maharashtrian *Vārī*,” which focuses on the act of hearing during the *vārī*

pilgrimage procession, a spectacular event involving thousands of people traversing crowded spaces to the deafening sound of drums and chanting. The discussion is framed by South Asian conceptions of audition, which link sound to the divine and construct it as a force that can act upon the world and on the listener. As Jones's engaging ethnography demonstrates, however, audition takes various forms. Listening can move some members of the audience to experience transcendence in an encounter with the divine; for others regional and/or national imaginaries may be mobilized; and still others may be moved by a "trip-karī" experience of the exotic. The participants in the procession are also listeners, but what they hear is very different from what a stationary audience hears. While pilgrims are mainly focused inwards, there are instances in which *vārīs* see and hear themselves. In effect, Jones notes, the procession foregrounds "feeling-singing listeners" rather than a unifying discourse; music activates processing for *vārīs* and bystanders alike.

The next two articles—"War of the Worlds: Music and Cosmological Battles in the Balinese Cremation Procession" by Michael B. Bakan and "Religious Processions, Cultural Identities, and Politics on Bali and Lombok, Indonesia" by David D. Harnish—feature ethnography from neighboring Southeast Asian islands, but do so in very different ways. Bakan focuses on traditional processions that accompany the dead to their cremation site, a trajectory that highlights critical aspects of Hindu-Balinese cosmology, which centers on a constant struggle for balance between benevolent and malevolent spirits. As Bakan demonstrates, the *gamelan beleganjur*, made up of a set of portable percussion instruments, primarily kettle-gongs, gongs, crash cymbals, and drums, uses "sonic power and rhythmic drive" to achieve three parallel objectives during the dangerous trajectory: to combat malevolent spirits; to sustain the resolve of those participating in the procession; and to encourage the soul (*atma*) of the deceased to proceed on the journey to the Upper World. Bakan's detailed description demonstrates that these are not easy tasks and require considerable skill on the part of the musicians. Indeed, they must be closely tuned in to all that is going on as they move toward their destination, taking the necessary sonic measures to ensure that the soul as well as the procession participants arrive safely. Ultimately, Bakan argues, the cremation procession can be seen as a metaphor of the movement required for well-functioning cultural life in Bali, particularly in a time of profound transformation, when the careful balancing of the new and the traditional is called for.

David Harnish is interested in the political overtones of processions in his discussion of the processional traditions in three arenas of folk (or *adat*) religiosity in Bali and Lombok: the Hindu-Balinese processional spheres in Bali; the folk processions staged by Muslim Sasaks in Lombok; and finally, the Lombok Lingsar festival that involves Hindu-Balinese migrants and Muslim Sasaks. Thus, readers are introduced to central features of the religious orientations of each group in order to show how they are brought together in the Lingsar festival. Lombok was ruled by the Balinese for over 200 years, and the Lingsar festival was meant to articulate the union between colonizer and colonized. For several centuries Lingsar may well have achieved its goal, as it was considered vital to the very fertility of the island that a balance be achieved and maintained between the two groups. Today, however, resistance to Balinese hegemony, along with pressures from religious reformists, is pushing toward a progressive increase in the

segregation of processions and the demarcation of ethnic boundaries. It is within this context that Harnish views processions as “public barometers for measuring socio-religious and political change.”

The final article in the issue comes from Christopher Witulski, titled “Crossing Paths: Musical and Ritual Interactivity between the Ḥamadsha and Gnawa in Sidi Ali, Morocco.” Throughout Morocco numerous different Islamic brotherhoods practice a range of healing rituals that involve spirit possession. Witulski notes that the literature on these brotherhoods presents them as highly differentiated and rigidly bound, though he soon discovered this not to be the case. For the most part the brotherhoods perform their rituals in private, but from time to time they take to the streets in processions where they can be seen and heard, affecting taste, but also providing models for musical innovations. A major opportunity for Moroccans to hear the distinct repertoires of the various brotherhoods is the pilgrimage to Sidi Ali, in which various groups set off through the streets of the town, each following its own trajectory, accompanied by its own musical style. Witulski participated in processions with two groups, the ḥamadsha and the gnawa, showing how their paths crossed continuously with other groups over the five days. In this way the musicians in the various brotherhoods gained some familiarity with the practices of their counterparts, participating in processes that further propelled these local sounds into the limelight, as they became emblems of national identity and the basis for commercial popular music.

