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Representations of African American Fife and Drum Music in North Mississippi

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative analysis of representations of the African American fife and drum musical tradition in North Mississippi, tracing the ways these representations are shaped by the ideologies, aims, methods, and social positions of the person(s) in primary control of representation. It includes the exploration and interpretation of audio recordings (including music, graphic presentation, and album copy), video, and film representations.

African American fife and drum music is rooted in cross-cultural exchanges of folklore, melody, lyrical text, and instrumentation between African and Anglo Americans dating back to the American Revolutionary War in the United States. It remained a strong musical practice in the southern states throughout the twentieth century but is now solely borne by the Turner family of Senatobia, Mississippi. Through the years, varied representations of this musical tradition reflect the idiosyncratic style of the producer illuminating otherwise hidden structures of cultural power.

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CHAPTER ONE:
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Introduction

This thesis is a comparative analysis of representations of the African American fife and drum music tradition in North Mississippi, tracing the ways they are shaped by the ideologies, aims, methods, and social positions of the person(s) in primary control of representation. My research aim is to explore and interpret audio, video, and film representations of fife and drum. Analysis of audio representations involves the sound music recording as well as the album graphics package including font styles, color palette, photograph(s), and album copy. Video and film analysis includes simultaneous and separate engagement with sound and image in each representation. This allows for detection of the producer's stylistic approach, motivation, and interpretation. It is acknowledged that each representation includes a team of people. However, for the purposes of this thesis, copyright holders are considered the person(s) in primary control of the product. The producers and their representations are introduced within their historical context. The results of the comparative analysis processes in this thesis demonstrate the ways that representations of this musical tradition are imbued with layers of power and politics. These layers interact with the producer's idiosyncrasies culminating in a frame of the subject matter that reinforces stereotypes about its origins, 'black authenticity', gender, and religion.

Mississippi has been host to early developments in roots, blues, and gospel musical activities since the nineteenth century. The recording industry monumentalized its music

Figure 1.1. Othar Turner Blues Marker. It reads: "Othar Turner: The African American fife and drum tradition in north Mississippi stretches back to the 1800s and is often noted for its similarities to African music. Its best known exponent, Otha (or Othar) Turner (1908-2003), presided over annual fife and drum picnics and goat roasts on his property in nearby Gravel Spirngs, and performed at numerous festivals. His music was featured in several documentaries as well as in Martin Scorsese's film "*Gangs of New York*." (Mississippi Blues Commission 2011) (Danser Fieldwork Photograph 2010)

and music makers beginning with the first blues recording of Blind Lemon Jefferson in 1927 (Evans 1982, 124). The 'blues markers' erected across the state by the International Blues Foundation and fans alike immortalize industry-recognized artists and their unique contributions to our understanding of this early form of popular music. Two such markers are erected in Tate County, Mississippi: "Black Fife & Drum Music" on one and "Othar Turner" (see Figure 1.1) on the other.

Othar (also known as "Otha" and "Other") Turner (1908-2003) emerged as the prominent figure in the African American Fife and Drum tradition particularly in the final decade of the twentieth century. One might have predicted, as ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik did (1999, 52), that this revered patriarch of the Turner family and the leader and fifer of the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble was the sole lineage bearer and that when he died so, too, did the tradition. The reality, however, was quite different. When Othar Turner and his daughter and key Rising Star drummer, Bernice Pratcher, passed on the

same day in 2003, Othar's grand-daughter Sharde Thomas (b. 1991) became the lineage bearer and the lead fifer of the Rising Star Fife & Drum band.

The Ethnographic Setting

Mississippi, the Magnolia State, is a Choctaw word meaning 'Father of the Waters' or simply 'Great Waters' or 'Big River'. She has a population of just fewer than three million set on forty-six thousand square miles. The fifth largest river in the world, the Mississippi River, forms her western border. Two thirds of all Mississippians are white, one third are black, less than two percent identify as American Indian or Asian, and less than one percent identify as mixed race (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Mississippi is the poorest state in the United States with over a quarter of the population living below the poverty line – half of whom are rural blacks. The economy has depended largely on cash crops of cotton, rice, and soybeans (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

North Mississippi borders Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and Louisiana (see Figure 1.2). The counties of Tate and Panola (known as Hill Country) are approximately forty-five minutes south of Memphis, Tennessee along interstate highway 55. In comparison with the blazing hot, flat lands and tourist bustle of the Mississippi Delta (birthplace of the Delta Blues style near Clarksdale, Mississippi), the Hill Country is quiet and slow-paced with lush, rolling hills wild with kudzu vines and foliage.

The community of Gravel Springs in Tate County is located approximately ten miles east and south of Senatobia, Mississippi and ten miles north of Como, Mississippi (see Figure 1.3). Gravel Springs is not a town site but, rather, a constellation of African American rural farm families. Among those families who have lived in the area for generations

Figure1.2. Map of Southern United States (Maps of the World 2011)

are the family names of Turner, Hemphill, Boyce, Faulkner, Young, Pratcher and Evans. Their farms are located along the north-south running “Gravel Springs Road.” Othar Turner’s farm (currently rented by ‘Lil’ Othar Turner) is located at 985 OB McClinton Road, Senatobia, Mississippi and is the site of the annual “Turner Family Picnic” (also known as “Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum Picnic” or the “Otha Turner Picnic”) which occurs on the last weekend of August (the American Labor Day holiday weekend).

Since 1961, the “Turner Family Picnic” has served the primary site for African

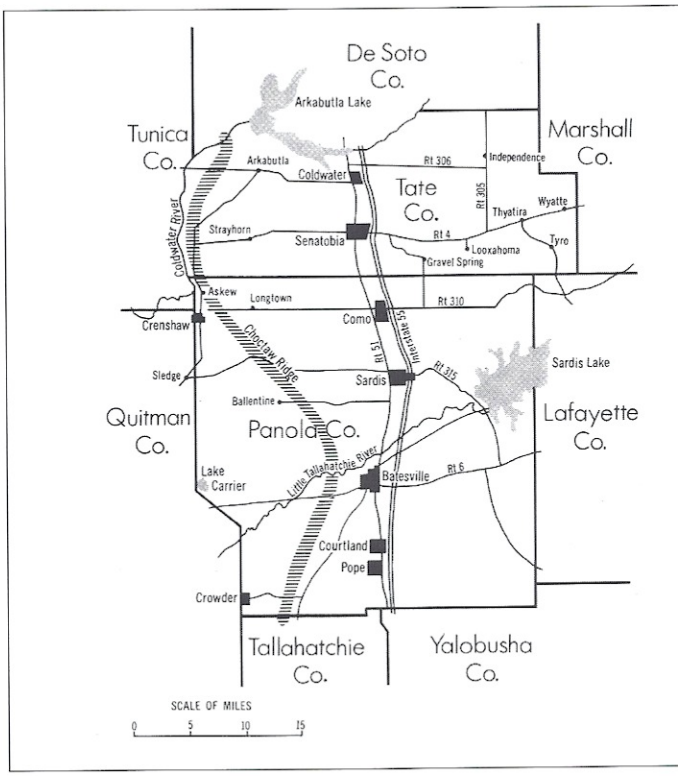

Figure1.3. Map of North Mississippi Hill Country (Lomax, Evans,Thurber, and The Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture 2000, 6)

American fife and drum music in North Mississippi (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). It officially begins on Friday midday and continues uninterrupted until midnight Saturday night. These days, picnic preparations begin Thursday and are completed early Friday morning. Othar's daughter, Betty Turner, the Turner family matriarch, oversees the preparations. She is joined by her sisters and daughters who break down the tasks for completion by other family members as well as enthusiastic national and international fans who wish to participate. Picnic preparations include building a site perimeter and parking areas, erecting the performance stage and signage, setting up the merchandise, food, and drink sales booth, and boiling goat and pork meat that is eventually barbequed Mississippi style and sold by the Turner family during the event.

Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble start and end the event with featured performances over the course of the weekend. When they are not playing, many Turner family members and regional musicians take turns playing a variety of songs from the Rising Star Fife & Drum tradition or cover songs by famous early blues artists of the area (*e.g.*, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, Jessie Mae Hemphill, R. L. Burnside).

People who attend the event include local community members, regional college students from nearby University of Mississippi, and national and international fans. Those who have travelled stay either in nearby hotels in Senatobia or Como or camp along the side of O.B. McClinton Road near the site. All attendees are expected to pay a five-dollar entry fee at the front gate. In recent years, the Turner family has built a higher fence around the performance site to encourage people to pay the entrance fee rather than watching it for free from the road.

Discovering the Tradition

I first heard African American fife and drum music in 2008 while living in Mississippi as a professional blues musician. During that time I encountered the music of Othar Turner on an audio recording entitled “Everybody Hollerin’ Goat” (Turner 2001). It was a striking and unusual experience to listen to music for which I had no frame of reference. For me, it blended polyrhythmic grooves that I associated with sensibilities of West African music; the shrill, piercing fife that I associated with British music, and lyrical narratives representing a combination of popular blues, Tin-Pan Alley, and American Civil War songs. I felt a sense of elation and excitement in ‘discovering’ this music because of

its unusual soundscape compared with other musical styles in the Mississippi Delta and Hill Country regions.

Initial research turned up two online articles about Othar Turner. The first, his official website (Turner 2008), and the second, a YouTube video entitled “Othar Turner and Sharde Thomas: ‘Remembering Othar Turner’ ” (Bluesfilm1 2008). I repeatedly watched the YouTube video as a means of generating preliminary research questions: Now that Othar Turner is deceased, is this music still being performed? Who is the leader? Is the current leader the young girl in the video who is being mentored by Mr. Turner? If so, who is she, where is she, and how old is she now?

Through a series of fortunate events, I established a close relationship with Dick ‘St. Louis Frank’ Fuhrman who has deep connections to the Turner family. Mr. Fuhrman became my primary research participant and introduced me to Bobbi Turner, Otha’s granddaughter and family spokesperson, by writing a letter to her (including a copy of my ethics approval and my research intentions). He made it clear to me that the Turner family was “highly suspicious about researchers and research interests” (Dick Fuhrman, pers. com., April 15, 2010) in their musical community and suggested that I begin building a relationship with Sharde and the Turner family prior to the picnic in August 2010. As a result, I decided to complete two fieldwork periods: April and August 2010. Altogether, I spent nine weeks as a researcher in the field.

Fieldwork Research Methodology

My fieldwork research employed an interpretive ethnomusicological multi-media approach focusing on issues of changing representations in African American fife and

drum music in North Mississippi. From my discussions with Mr. Fuhrman, I suspected the community felt they had been harmed financially by prior research projects. My goal was to approach the Turner family with sensitivity and to be as transparent as possible about my project and its potential outcomes. I also wanted to work collaboratively toward outcomes that would strengthen both the musical community and my research project. Of course, the risk was that the community would be unwilling or unable to engage in the fieldwork process.

The participant-observer approach was supplemented by performance observation at the annual "Turner Family Picnic," archival research, and multi-media research. These methods included: historical research at the Blues Archive at the University of Mississippi, review and comparison of archival material (*e.g.*, concerts, interviews, audio and video recordings) documenting the fife and drum traditions in North Mississippi and other geographical areas of the Southern United States. Other methods involved interviews with members of the Rising Star Fife and Drum community past and present in an effort to establish narrative coherence and continuity. All quotes from participant interactions are from handwritten notes made immediately after the conversations ended. These recollections are intended to be as accurate as possible and may be limited by temporality as well as my ability to accurately detail the beautiful subtleties of the vernacular in this region.

Dead Ends and Detours

"No Audio, No Interviews, No Video"

In April 2010, I called Bobbi Turner, Turner family spokesperson, and was invited to

her home for discussion about my research project. She indicated that I would first meet her mother, Betty Turner, Othar's daughter, who lived in a house at the front of the property and that we would then move to her trailer at the back of the property. (Betty and Bobbie live a mile from Othar Turner's homestead site in the community of Gravel Springs.) I was greeted with openness and enthusiasm by Bobbi Turner, her daughter, Ada, and family matriarch, Betty Turner. All three members of the family wore T-shirts with a photograph of Othar Turner with the years of his birth and death underneath. My intention for the initial meeting was to explain my research goals in order to obtain the family's permission to attend the Turner Family Picnic in August, to identify and interview key research participants, and to document (audio and video) the event.

Little did I know at that time of my initial interview that it would be my one and only opportunity to speak directly with any member of the Turner family or the Gravel Springs community. Following the pleasantries of introduction and discussion about my life as a musician in Canada, Bobbie Turner sought specifics of my research and invited her niece, Sharde Thomas, to join us. As I clarified my research objectives, Bobbi's first question was, "you ain't one of those Alan Lomax types are ya? 'Cuz we don' care for him and his ways much 'roun here" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). She further added that, "he did our family wrong. Promised, owed, and never paid up!" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). I listened intently and worked to distance myself from the seeming 'Lomax legacy' by identifying participatory research strategies I thought would benefit the community. Finally, at the end of the conversation, Bobbi simply stated, "you can come to the picnic but no audio, no interviews, no video" (Bobbi

Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). What events had transpired to prompt such a strong reaction?

The search for 'black authentic' music making that began in the nineteenth century progressed through the twentieth century with folklore initiatives by the Library of Congress. In 1942, in a joint project between the Library of Congress and Fisk University, Alan Lomax and John Work III became the first to record the Sid Hemphill Band playing African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi (Work, Jones, and Adams Jr. 2005). Lomax returned for another field recording 1959 (Lomax 1959). Othar Turner was not a featured musician at either of those recording sessions but as the search for 'black authentic' music production continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s, Othar and his family became the focus of ethnomusicological fieldwork by William Ferris, David Evans, and Judy Peiser. The result was a 16mm film entitled "Gravel Springs Fife and Drum" (1972). By the end of the 1970s, Alan Lomax had completed another film featuring Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum entitled "The Land Where the Blues Began" (1979). This was the last time that Othar Turner or the Rising Star Fife & Drum were voluntary ethnomusicological research participants.

In an effort to salvage the participant-observation part of the project, I scrambled to determine a potential role in the "Turner Family Picnic" and in the promotion of Sharde Thomas's music. Bobbi indicated that she would talk to "The Committee" comprised of her mother Betty, Aunt Ada, and Aunt Dorothy – keepers of the Turner musical legacy – who she was off to meet as part of a "private family fife and drum party where there is only room for tradition…none-a-this new stuff. The stuff that makes Granddaddy proud.

That's what Sharde's gotta do for us" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010).

I had telephone conversations with Bobbi Turner about the decision of "The Committee" between our initial meeting in April 2010 and the "Turner Family Picnic" in August 2010. She affirmed the stance to disallow interviews, audio, and video documentation and welcomed me to be a part of picnic preparations and the musical event. Bobbi stated that she thought it was best if I just "show up like everyone else and have a good time" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010).

The boundaries that the Turner family communicated to me were clear and unwavering: (1) They no longer wanted or needed ethnomusicological research about their music; (2) I could attend the event without any recording equipment; (3) They own, promote, and benefit from their Turner family merchandise (e.g., the Othar Turner memorial T-shirts); (3) They organize (*e.g.,* "The Committee") and control their cultural product; and (4) Their family gathers in private to keep our musical tradition alive.

What happens when musical communities no longer need or want to be researched? What will the questions of ethnomusicology be then? What happens to ethnomusicology when the communities we study control their place in the world and are in complete control of our mediated experience?

Fieldwork Limitations, Fieldwork Freedoms

In retrospect, what seemed to be serious fieldwork limitations (e.g., no audio, interviews or video) imposed on this research project ultimately freed me to explore the power of the image and the power of my own imagination. "The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self of the chains that shackle the spirit" (Stravinsky

1970, 65). While it was inconvenient to have important fieldwork tools stripped away, I was also freed to become completely present at the “Turner Family Picnic” as a performance participant, rather than locked behind a camera, microphone, or notebook.

Over time I grew frustrated with being unable to secure an interview with anyone, family or otherwise. So in August 2010, I returned to Mississippi to revisit contacts and materials. Returning to the Blues Archives at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi was the most productive of all as I discovered a wealth of secondary sources. In addition, the archive holds extensive audio and visual materials. While viewing these materials - many of which I have purchased copies of in order to share with the Turner family and to forward my own research - I began investigating and interrogating audiovisual footage as historic, dynamic, moving images of the African American fife and drum musical tradition.

Research Aims

In this thesis, I seek to explore changing media representations of African American fife and drum music. My research aim is to investigate and interpret these representations as they appear on audio, video, and film recordings drawing to developments in cultural interpretation - comparative and ethnomusicological. Specifically, I turn to Jon Cruz’s concept of ethnosympathy (Cruz 1999) and Ronald Radano’s ideas about racialized views of black music (Radano 2000). However, I explore how the cultural study of music has moved beyond those early practices by asking questions about “music as a lived experience, as commodity, as social practice, and as cultural symbol” (Titon 2003, 171). Who are the central figures in the creation of audio, video, and film representations

of North Mississippi fife and drum music? What ideological perspectives are revealed through their documentation by word, image, audio, or visual position? Who has benefited? Who has been harmed? How has the Turner family participated or resisted changing representations? How have ideological narratives been a part of shaping current musical practices?

A Brief Overview of the 2010 Turner Family Picnic

Preparation

The Turner Family Picnic is an annual event that usually takes place the last weekend in August. It begins late afternoon on Friday and ends at midnight on Saturday. Preparations for the event begin a month in advance with the majority of work occurring Friday morning (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). As stated previously, the homestead of Othar Turner, now rented by his grandson "Lil' Otha" Turner, is the physical site of picnic activities while neighboring lands and yards become parking and camping areas.

I was invited by the Turner Family to be a part of the preparation phase as well as the event itself. I arrived at nine o'clock in the morning and work preparations were already in full swing being shared among Turner family members, local friends, and fans. "The Committee" consisting of Betty Turner, her sisters, and daughters were the key decision makers about all aspects of the preparations. In total, there were approximately thirty workers representing a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The picnic site (see Figure 1.4) was surrounded by a ten-foot high wall of blue tarp material. This was the first year the family had erected a perimeter (Bobbi Turner, pers.

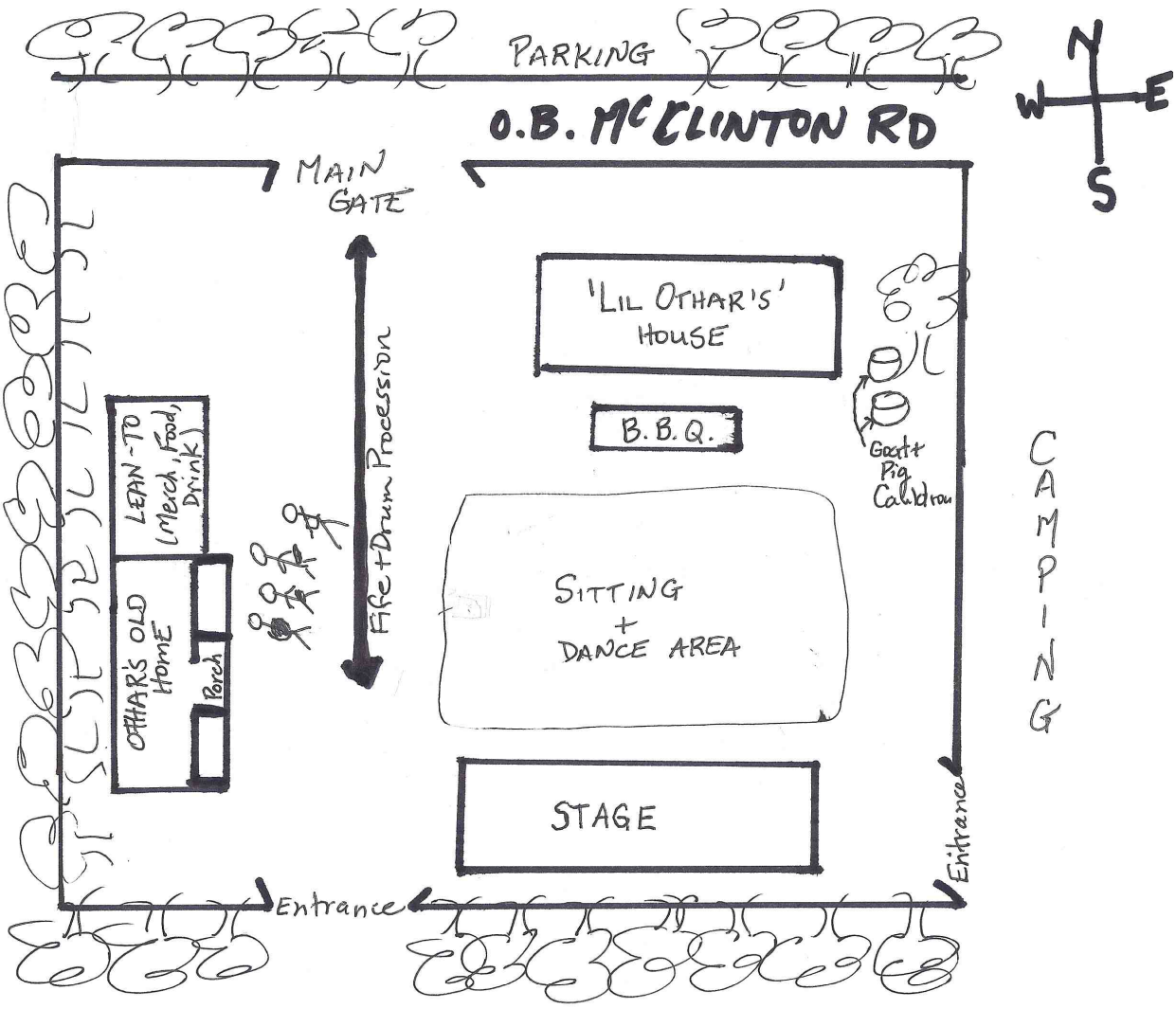

Figure1.4. Turner Family Picnic Site

com., April 23, 2010). The entrance to the picnic site faced north and the performance stage, a flatbed trailer, was at the opposite, south end of the property closest to the Gravel Springs creek that ran behind the stage. Othar's small sharecropper home, often featured in video footage of the site, was on the west side of the performance site and a covered extension had been built. This lean-to was where the merchandise, food, and beverages were sold. Beyond the eastern border of the site was an open field that became a campground for event participants.

The focus of event preparation was the boiling of goat and pig meat in two black cauldrons. The boiling was accomplished over a two-hour period per batch. There were six batches in total. Once boiled, the meat was barbequed for another few hours and was made into sandwiches consisting of white bread, meat, and the special Turner family barbeque sauce. This activity was considered a significant part of the festivities and accounted for a majority of income for the Turner family (Dick Fuhrman, pers. com., April 16, 2010) as both barbequed goat and pulled pork sandwiches were for sale throughout the weekend. The recipe for the boil was a guarded Turner family secret overseen by the elderly women of "The Committee." When Othar was alive, he raised the goats to be butchered for the event, but that tradition ended with his passing. The initial purchase of meat was a significant expenditure for the family and their commitment stemmed from that being considered an "important part of the picnic tradition. Some say, it's as important as the music itself" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010).

Two other important pieces to the preparatory process were the performance stage and merchandise areas. The stage was a long, narrow, black flatbed trailer approximately three feet from the ground. A standard grouping of two speakers, a sub woofer, mixing board, microphones, microphone stands, direct input boxes, and line chords were its only decoration. There was little fanfare about the stage, which seemed appropriate given the site itself and the fact that the featured performers, Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum, performed on the ground, not the stage.

The merchandise area was under the same lean-to as the food and beverage sales. Items for sale include T-shirts, caps, compact discs, and handmade fifes. All items, ex-

cept the homemade fife, included names or photos of Othar Turner, Sharde Thomas, or the Rising Star Fife & Drum. The pricing ranged from twenty dollars for a T-shirt to one hundred dollars for a fife.

All preparations were completed by noon in order to avoid the intense Mississippi early afternoon heat. The first fife and drum performance began around five o'clock in the afternoon.

Performance

My key research participant, Dick Fuhrman, advised me that it was an awesome experience to hear the fife and drum music drifting through the trees. In fact, he claimed that one could hear that music miles away. When I headed south off highway four on Gravel Springs Road, I tested his claim and, indeed, I could hear the fife and drum music floating through the thick Mississippi air. In fact, Gravel Springs "neighbors say that it is the call of the fife that lets them know it is time to come to our farm for the picnic. Their mouths a-waterin' for our goat sandwiches and barbeque sauce!" (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010).

I paid my entrance fee of five dollars and received a wristband that allowed me to attend the "Turner Family Picnic" all weekend. It officially began with a procession led by Sharde Thomas playing a 5-hole, right-handed, homemade, cane fife. The Rising Star Fife & Drum band consisted of three members: Rodney Turner, Sharde's cousin, played the bass drum strapped vertically to his chest with crisscross straps across his back. The positioning of the bass drum was consistent with these types of military marching bands. He used one homemade drumstick fashioned from a piece of wood and the oth-

er, a mallet, similar to a drumstick with a broader, softer end. Typically, the mallet is used for very soft rolls, legato strokes, and rich tones (John Newton, pers. com., March 22, 2011). Andre Evans, another cousin to Sharde, and legendary ensemble drummer, R. L. Boyce, played snare drums strapped to their waists and held on the hip military style. Both used standard, nylon-tipped drumsticks.

The procession began at the main entrance gate of the site welcoming event participants to the event. Sharde, facing the drummers who were in close proximity to her, played a few bars of the melody of the song, “Glory, Glory Hallelujah,” which seemed to signal to the drummers both the specific song and its tempo. The snare drummers joined her in the performance before the bass drum added the low-end tones a few bars later. Once the rhythms were established Sharde entered the site walking backwards facing the drummers who walked forward. She rocked slowly back and forth, alternating left then right throughout the procession. The song was repeated until, twenty minutes later, they reached Othar’s sharecropper cabin at the south end of the property approximately fifty yards from the main entrance.

After the initial procession, the ensemble played more songs considered standard repertoire for the picnic. As Bobbi Turner indicated during our meeting, “Sharde can do what she want being all creative and such but she still have to play the old stuff for us. That’s the tradition and we make sure she do that for us” (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). Over the course of the “Turner Family Picnic,” Sharde and the Rising Star Fife & Drum played the older songs and, also, Sharde’s new compositions. The standard, older songs in the repertoire included: “Shimmy She Wobble,” “Glory, Glory

Hallelujah," "Bounce Ball," "Station Blues," and "My Babe." Sharde's new compositions added to the picnic repertoire included: "What Do I Do?" and "We Made It."

At the beginning of the picnic, Sharde and the Rising Star Fife & Drum ushered the Turner family members and participants of the event. Their music performance was photographed and filmed by mostly white audience members numbering approximately fifty. After the initial procession and brief performance, Sharde and the Rising Star Fife & Drum took a break for sixty to ninety minutes while regional musicians performed on the flatbed stage. The musicians performed two or three songs (usually old blues standards from the area) in various constellations throughout the event. As an independent musician, I recognized this performance arrangement as an 'open stage' where the experience is collaborative and varied compared to a single, highlighted performer. The rotation of musicians on stage continued throughout the event and filled in space when Sharde and the Rising Star Fife & Drum were not performing.

The picnic had an easy going feel to it and the number of audience members ballooned from fifty late in the afternoon to well over three thousand by midnight. Around ten o'clock, the crowd of tourists and fans, consisted of mostly white people over thirty-five, left the site and a younger, regional, black audience emerged. This change seemed to have a direct effect on the Rising Star Fife & Drum performance itself.

Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum adjusted to the change in participants by moving from a performance with clear delineation between audience and musicians to a highly dynamic and interactive space. In this space, audience members became an integral part of the performance by dancing with the musicians and each other,

addressing the drums with pelvic rotations, and singing along to songs. This interaction seemed to create a reciprocal creative process where the musicians began to dance and sway and shimmy to the ground. There were times where this interaction would continue over the course of a ten-minute song and others times where one song would be repeated for thirty minutes or longer keeping the energy high. This change happened both Friday and Saturday nights.

As the event progressed, I encountered people outside the main entrance gate who were under the influence of drugs and alcohol. There was also fighting, two stabbings, drug dealing, and prostitution. This seemed out of character for this small rural community and very strict Turner family moral code of conduct (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). It was also striking that these activities did not attract police attention, given that Tate County has a zero tolerance policy for public consumption of alcohol and drugs. However, these behaviors seemed to be viewed as part of the experience and did not interrupt the events in progress inside the site.

After thirty-six hours of music, dance, connection, and fun, the 2010 “Turner Family Picnic” ended at exactly midnight on Saturday night. It is the belief among African American Methodist Baptists in the area that there is to be “no dance or music on the Lord’s Day so we just make sure it all ends before that ‘cuz we gotta live here long after the picnic party” (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). The ending procession started at the front porch of Othar’s sharecropper cabin north to the main entrance. Sharde played the fife walking forward while the drummers followed her. She then arrived at the perimeter of the site, stopped moving and stopped playing. This signaled the end and an

invitation, of sorts, for all participants to leave the site.

The “Turner Family Picnic” is a unique music event characterized by a sense of community that extended beyond the Gravel Springs borders. There are great efforts to create an atmosphere of safety, fun, ease, and relaxation for all who show interest in the African American fife and drum style. Despite the Turner family concerns about researchers, they remained hospitable and generous in sharing their traditions.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2, Early Fife and Drum History and Its Representations, traces the early history of African American fife and drum music performance and, specifically, the ways that its musical sensibilities are rooted in both African and European musical styles. I map the historical trajectory of this music as it develops during the tension of wartime America beginning with the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) through the American Civil War (1861-1865), through the segregated spaces of the Jim Crow era, during the Civil Rights era, and into the present. Throughout the chapter, I highlight key points of change with discussion about the politics of representation and the continual quest by folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and later, the commercial entertainment industry, for an authentic musical product representative of African American culture. Over time, layers of interpretations about African American fife and drum music and their representations on audio recordings, video and film have highlighted underlying tensions about its musical origins, music makers, performance styles, and economic realities.

In **Chapter Three, Audio Recordings: Music, Images, and Words,** and in **Chapter Four**, **Video and Film Representations**, I begin by identifying a framework for analysis

that addresses the unique characteristics of the material being evaluated (*e.g.*, photographs or film, audio recordings or written word). The materials are grouped according to the profession of the producer, motivations for the project, and its intended market. These groups include: (1) Academic Representations; (2) Educational Representations; (3) Independent Artistic Representations, and (4) Commercial Entertainment Industry Representations. These groupings are for the management of materials only and should not be considered as categories. It is acknowledged, for example, that an academic representation may become part of a commercial product. Each section concludes with a discussion about the producer's frame and its influence on the representation.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter. There will be an interpretive discussion regarding the producer's representation, the music economy of authenticity, and shaping the cultural product. Finally, there will be an identification of future research directions and concluding comments.

CHAPTER TWO:
EARLY FIFE AND DRUM HISTORY AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS

Thoughts on Historical Construction

There are many nagging questions when one is reconstructing an historical past for those who were pushed out of history, or, at the very least, were banished to its margins. Yet, the invisible faces and soundless voices deserve space and attention. In the case of black culture in America, historians have faced a monumental task of piecing together an historical past of African slaves in America while relying largely on documented observations by a dominant white culture. Critical black writer, sociologist and activist W. E. B. DuBois pointed to folklore (*e.g.*, orature) as a means of giving faces and voices to descendants of African slaves (DuBois 1994,155-164). While it is an impossible task to write a definitive historical account of African American music, it is possible to review available information and offer one interpretation using an historical ethnomusicological framework that seeks to contextualize and interrogate historical documents.

There is a small amount of documentation including legislation, wartime diaries, song lyrics, ethnographic interviews, sound recordings, icons, illustrated or photographic images, and film footage that pertains directly to roots of African American fife and drum music. This historical information is primarily located in special collections at the Library of Congress, University of Mississippi, University of Richmond (Virginia), and Colonial Williamsburg. But why is it necessary to reconstruct an historical past when the roots of musical traditions become harder and harder to locate?

Modern critical race theorist Paul Gilroy challenges the validity of reconstructing the roots of a musical tradition at all.

> Apart from anything else, the globalization of vernacular forms means that our understanding of antiphony will have to change. The calls and responses no longer converge in the tidy patterns of secret, ethnically encoded dialogue. The original call is becoming harder to locate. If we privilege it over the subsequent sounds that compete with one another to make the most appropriate reply, we will have to remember that these communicative gestures are not expressive of an essence that exists outside of the acts which perform them and thereby transmit the structures of racial feeling to wider, as yet uncharted, worlds. (Gilroy 1993, 110)

His position challenges the ways that history has been recorded and interpreted while, at the same time, suggesting that when the focus is on the historical rootedness of music, one misses the richness of musical production in the present and reinforces a racial divide. This is a provocative argument. Is there place for tracing historical linkages as a way of understanding present music making practices?

Despite Gilroy's challenge, I take the position that it is a valuable exercise to examine historical musical threads and the socio-political conditions that birthed a new form of American music rooted in African and European traditions. It is important because tracing history contextualizes both the producer(s) and their representations. The examination begins with brief overviews of probable West African and European influences on the African American fife and drum music.

Early History of African American Fife and Drum

Musical Translocation: West Africa and Europe

Millions of West African peoples (e.g., Yoruba, Mande, Gbe, Wolof, and Akan) were enslaved and shipped to the Americas (the New World) by Portuguese, British, French,

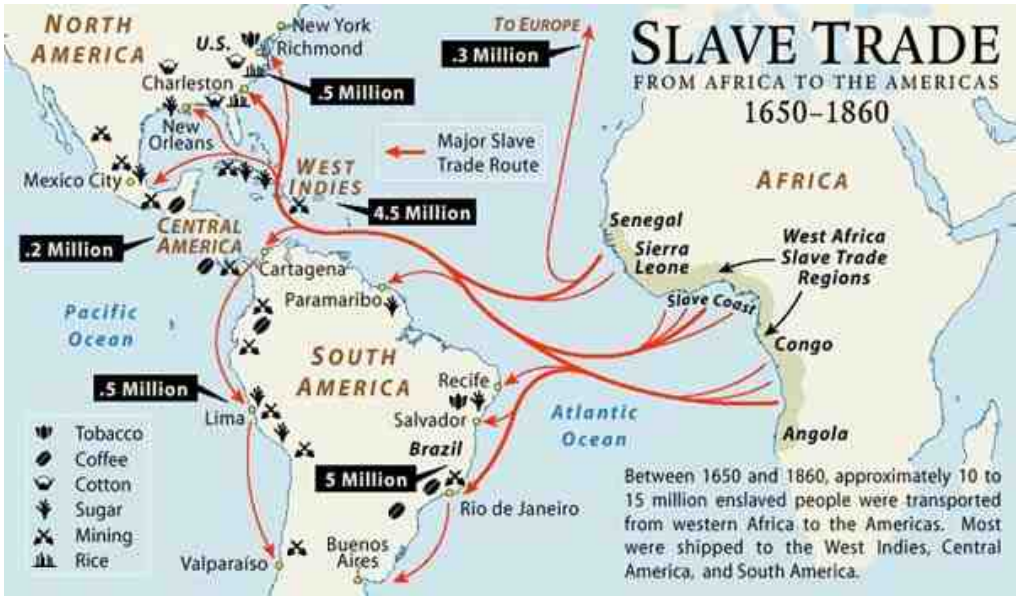

Figure 2.1. Slave Trade from Africa to the Americas (Frankel 2008)

and Spanish slave traders from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries (Mintz 2007) (see Figure 2.1). While it is impossible to know all the facts of West African musical culture in past centuries, it can be agreed that music was an integral part of life's passages (birth, puberty, marriage, death) and that performances included dance, poetry, chanting, storytelling, singing, and playing musical instruments (Nketia 1974, 21-24).

West African musical practices included polyrhythms - a distinctly African musical feature. Ethnomusicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia indicates that musical structures

> are learned through participation in musical events, passed on aurally from generation to generation, and applied, modified, and expanded by succeeding generations. They include melodic, and rhythmic elements, both linear and multi-linear, which permit limited improvisations. (Nketia 1974, 111)

Traditional instrumentation often included carved drums covered with various animal skins. Among the variations in instrumentation were hand carved flutes (Southern 1971, 3-11). Among the Dagomba in Ghana, West Africa, for example, gungon drums ('talking drums'), brekete drums (see Figure 2.2) and kalambu (transverse flutes) remain a part

Figure 2.2: Dagomba Drummers from Tamale, Ghana (EarthCDs 2003)

of musical practices. Collective performance of music meant that everyone had a role even if defined along gender lines (*e.g.*, men played instruments while women sang, dance, and chanted) (Nketia 1974, 35-39). To what extent did West Africans bring their music, instruments, and musical practices to North America?

There are several eighteenth-century sources that indicate slave traders encouraged African slaves to play music, dance, and sing as a way of boosting morale, in order to prevent death (Epstein 1977, 66-67). While there is evidence that knowledge of African instruments including flutes and drums reached America, it is unknown if "instruments reached the New World in the hands of the captives or their captors, or whether they were constructed in the new environment from memory, using local materials" (Kubik 1999, 7). The diversity of musical traditions among West African tribes as well as language and cultural differences make it impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the transmission of musical practices.

In Europe, the earliest recognizable form of fife and drum music was during the medieval period where it was primarily used for dance music. “The military fife and drum, which originated in Switzerland, probably in the fourteenth century, were developed as a consequence of cultural contact with the Islamic world during the period of the Crusades” (Clark 2011,1). Admired for its military excellence, Swiss military music was adopted across Europe in Italy, Germany, France, and then exported to America (Moon, Watson, and White 1996, iv). The Swiss military fife and drum model incorporated a fifer and drummer into each company. When companies of soldiers gathered together so did their fifers and drummers forming a corps (Moon, Watson, and White 1996, v). The fife was a six finger hole, cylindrical, side-blown flute sometimes thought of as the transverse flute. The drums, snare and bass, were made of “vellum heads and gut snares…beaten by wooden mallets in rudimentary style” (Moon, Watson, and White 1996, iv).

Characteristics of European military fife and drum music included the broadcast of various signals regulating military camp life (*e.g.*, meal time, sleep/wake time, assembly) as well as the communication of battlefield instructions. Fife and drum music also fulfilled a ceremonial role during parades, assemblies, and military reviews, where troops would demonstrate their military skills. Genres performed included instrumental drum rudiments, army songs, and folk songs (Moon, Watson, and White 1996, iv-24).

Two unique hallmarks of the Swiss style includes a snare drum positioned over the right shoulder so that it sits at an angle over the left hip and the position and grip of the left-hand on the drum stick as a result (Clark 2011, 5). The Swiss developed a “system

of rhythmic patterns known as rudimental drumming, still practiced in modified form today" (Clark 2011, 5). 'Drum rudiments' refers to a standardized set of drum methods and instruction. These include seven essential rudiments (e.g., single stroke roll, multiple bounce roll, double stroke open roll, five stroke roll, single paradiddle, flam, and drag) from which all other rudiments stem (Wanamaker & Carson 1997, 3-4).

Fife and Drum Music in the American Revolution

The history of Mississippi is characterized by seventeenth and eighteenth century French and British political agendas. Of significance to the struggle was the domination of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans, Louisiana. Both the river and the port were central to developing trade and strengthening economic and political positions. A majority of African slaves landed along the eastern seaboard and the port of New Orleans where they were then bought, sold, and traded as human commodities by plantation owners (Southern 1971, 137-149).

Historical documentation of fife and drum music began as early as 1685. During the early years of the enslavement of African and North American Indian peoples, it was required that all would be trained in the militia. However, as fear of slave rebellion grew, firearms were withheld and their enrollment duties were limited to service as drummers and fifers (Southern 1971, 42-43).

Little is known about early teaching methods or the instruments of black slave fifers and drummers. Eileen Southern, prominent scholar on the subject, suggests that slaves fashioned their own instruments based on the knowledge of instrument making from their motherland (Southern 1971, 46) while Steven Cornelius suggests that plantation

owners and the military purchased their instruments and provided instruction (Cornelius 2004, 174-182). One can only speculate about the kinds of instruments used, and how they were learned. It is plausible, given West African traditions of instrument making (*e.g.*, drums from trees and animal hides and fifes from hollowed cane) and practices of orature (*e.g.*, parables, storytelling, spoken-musical rhythms), that early fife and drums played by African slaves in the United States were hand-made and that learning occurred through routine and repetition on the battlefield or on the plantation.

Participation of African Americans in fife and drum music developed on the battlefields of early America, beginning with the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and later in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the War of 1812 (1812-1815), and the American Civil War (1861-1865). One of the earliest laws, the Virginia Act of 1776, stated that blacks "shall be employed as drummers, fifers, or pioneers" (Southern 1971, 77). As field musicians, black fifers and drummers transmitted basic orders, rallied the troops, conveyed military signals, and regulated marching. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, military fifers and drummers formed all-black bands-for-hire (Epstein 1977, 155-156).

By the time of the American Civil War, abolitionists in the North took greater interest (beyond reinforcing stereotypes of blackface minstrelsy) in black musical production and began documenting lyrics, stylistic approaches to songs, instrument construction, and the manner of performance practice. Although documentation of African American musical involvement in wartime efforts focuses primarily on Union Army activities, there is also evidence to suggest that these types of musical practices also occurred in the Con-

federate Army (Southern 1971, 172).

During slavery, plantation life was an intimate intercultural space among and between Anglo and African Americans. It is likely that there was borrowing, blending, and adaptation of musical and dance styles. Black music production had qualities of formal and communal performance activities that incorporated dance as well as varied musical styles. It was common that black music production in Mississippi included celebration of holidays, end of harvest season, church services, sharing music with fellow slaves, and performing for 'the master' or plantation guests (Southern 1971, 62-68).

The hard-fought American Civil War and the subsequent emancipation of slaves led to segregationist policies of the Jim Crow era (1876-1965). One can speculate that black musicians on both sides of the Civil War returned to their communities and their families with new music to share and to incorporate in local performance opportunities. Given an African American history of oral transmission through poetry, song lyrics, and storytelling, we can also assume that black fife and drum music continued to be interwoven with local, mostly African American (due to segregationist practices), folklore and other musical styles.

Documentation about African American fife and drum music after its wartime use is difficult to locate. Two pieces of information about the continuation of this musical practice include: (1) A Samuel Benjamin drawing, published in 1878 by Harper's New Monthly Magazine, depicting eight black children of various ages playing fifes, bass (box) and snare (box) drums as well as cymbals and bugles (Southern and Wright 2000, 220) (see Figure 2.3). (2) Mississippi fifers Sid Hemphill (Lomax 1993) and Othar Turner (Mitchell

Figure 2.3. “The Juvenile Band, Fernandina” - Samuel Benjamin Drawing (Southern and Wright 2000, 220)

1971), reported in fieldwork interviews that they received mentorship on the fife from neighbors and became part of fife and drum bands as early as the 1920s.

Other than these two instances, there is scant information available between the end of the American Civil War and the first recording of Sid Hemphill by John Work III and Alan Lomax in 1942. However, we know that as generations passed, African Americans drew from a variety of musical sources and arranged them anew thereby creating original cultural products (White and White, 2005, 37). By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the progression of musical developments in jazz, blues, ragtime, and gospel were being brought to larger audiences via the vaudeville tour circuit and prompted increased interest in the study of music. The observation, documentation, and in some cases, mocking, of black music making shifted to the scientific study of music setting the stage for interesting ethnographic issues surrounding ethnosympathy,

authenticity, and folklorization.

Representations

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, as America struggled with segregationist Jim Crow laws (1876-1965) that gave African Americans 'separate but equal' status, a white fascination with black culture, black music making, and racial difference became a central focus of "the new ethnosympathy" (Cruz 1999, 3). Ethnosympathy is the idea that one can discover the "underlying authenticity of subjects through their cultural practices" (Cruz 1999, 7). The search for cultural authenticity prompted a framework of interpretation that relied on "cultural performances, practices, goods, and objects…cultural authenticity was the key to subject authenticity" (Cruz 1999. 7). The move toward the professionalization of cultural interpretation (*e.g.*, anthropology, comparative musicology) promoted a "double logic" – black culture as both "desirable and threatening to (because it was simultaneously reflective of and different from) the white, civilized self" (Radano 2000, 402).

As the twentieth century began, black composers, performers, and producers found success in largely urban markets, while less mobile rural black musicians performed at less formal social occasions (e.g., blackface minstrel shows, churches, public establishments, and political events) (Cornelius 2004, 215-229). Among (primarily nonprofessional) rural African American musicians in the South, folklore (recollections, ballads, songs, poems, stories, and myths), radio, and records generated musical ideas. A limited number of original or cover songs were eventually recorded and published and, subsequently, sold as 'race records' under folk, blues, and gospel categories.

Through technology, the effects of mass mediation of sound recordings, “projections of racial and musical authenticities grew. A racialized ‘black essence’…arose inexorably from modernity’s primordial well spring – the American Market – to project an illusory folk authenticity” (Radano 2000, 462). Record companies who were motivated to stimulate the music economy shaped ideas of black music as a mysterious, powerful “force of nature” rooted in exotic, complex African rhythms and musical understandings (Radano 2000, 462-463).

In 1928, the Archive of Folk Culture was created within the Music Division of the Library of Congress (The American Folklife Center - Library of Congress 2011). Under the direction of this institution, an ethnographic enterprise was established. Thus began the American quest to find and preserve African American folk music (among other ‘non-Western’ musical forms). The Library of Congress directed by Archibald MacLeish encouraged individual and joint ethnographic projects with other educational institutions interested in this type of research. One of those educational institutions was Fisk University in Nashville – an all black university at the time.

In 1941, John Work III, a professor at Fisk, conceived an ethnographic research project about folklore practices in Coahoma, Tate, and Panola Counties in northern Mississippi. High-ranking university officials suggested that he work jointly with Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress toward completion of this project. At that time, Lomax was in a position of authority as an Assistant in Charge of the Archive of Folk Song of the Library of Congress (The American Folklife Center - Library of Congress 2011). The institutional relationship between Fisk and the Library of Congress became strained when, in

an attempt to control the project, the Library of Congress and Alan Lomax refused to supply needed research supplies to Work, including blank phonograph discs for field recordings. Eventually, supplies were lent to Fisk in exchange for direction of field research and ownership of the research material (Work, Jones, and Adams, 1-26).

Lomax reconfigured field research directions and, in the summer of 1942, together with John Work III and his team of Fisk University researchers, recorded those who were to become key figures in folk and blues music from Mississippi. Among those recorded were McKinley 'Muddy Waters' Morganfield, Sid Hemphill, Fred McDowell, and Son House. Sid Hemphill's Band performed a popular Tin-Pan Alley song, "After the Ball Is Over," and this became the first known ethnographic recording of North Mississippi fife and drum music. Curiously, John Work III is not credited for his work on this recording (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture 2000).

Sid Hemphill (1876-1942) was a North Mississippi Hill Country musician of great fascination to Alan Lomax. According to Lomax's 1993 autobiography, "The Land Where the Blues Began" (1993), where Lomax details his 'friendship' with Hemphill, he viewed Hemphill's musical skills as an 'authentic' link to Africa and the 1942 recording of the "Sid Hemphill Band" (Sid Hemphill on fife and Lucius Smith, Alec Askew, and Will Head on drums) as his greatest accomplishment (Lomax 1993, 37).

Lomax returned to the area again in 1959 to record performances by other African American fife and drum ensembles in Tate and Panola Counties. During that fieldwork expedition, he recorded The Young Brothers (Ed, Lonnie Sr., and Lonnie Jr.) playing an original fife and drum song named, "Hen Duck" and "Jim and John" (Lomax 1959). The

instruments used in The Young Brothers fife and drum ensemble included a cane fife, bass, and snare drum as well as rhythmic hand clapping by women from the neighborhood. Lomax described the music of The Young Brothers as “primitive” and “African” (Lomax 1959). Never shy of poetic overlay, he further stated that when Lonnie “sets his ‘fice’ to his lips, he turns into a dark Pan, cocking his instrument at the stars, swaying and stepping in an ancestral dance as he blows one African riff after another” (Lomax 1959).

Lomax had a prolific career as an American folklorist, musician, and radio announcer. He collected and recorded thousands of songs from all over the world. Recently, his legacy has been the subject of scholarly scrutiny due to ethical issues such as appropriation of African American field recordings for personal financial gain and reinforcement of racial stereotypes (Szwed 2010 and Work, Jones, Adams 2005). Regardless of current debates about his legacy, Lomax remains a seminal figure in the study of American folklore.

In 1967, George Mitchell, a freelance journalist from Georgia, met and recorded Othar Turner in North Mississippi. He did not consider himself a folklorist or an ethnomusicologist but a “freelancer for the labels that were around then. My plan was to record these people on spec, and if I succeeded in getting the recordings issued on a label, the artist would get paid” (Mitchell 2008). George Mitchell’s interests went beyond audio recordings. He also saw potential in book projects, photojournalism, and documentary filmmaking (Mitchell 2008). One of these leads included the first ethnographic photos, interviews, and recordings with Othar Turner and Sid Hemphill’s granddaughter and

North Mississippi fifer and drummer, Jessie Mae Hemphill. This led to the publication of his first book, “Blow My Blues Away” (1971) that features a transcribed interview with Othar Turner and an extensive compact disc publication, “The George Mitchell Collection: Volumes 1-45” (2008) captures obscure recordings by the Como Fife & Drum Band of North Mississippi. He collaborated with ethnomusicologist David Evans to exchange leads that could develop into fruitful projects in Mississippi (Mitchell 2008). Following Mitchell’s advice, David Evans began researching the music of Othar Turner in 1969 and his work eventually formed the basis for the first ethnomusicoogical documentary film on North Mississippi fife and drum music entitled “Gravel Springs Fife and Drum,” (1972). It was directed by William Ferris, audio tracked by David Evans, and edited by Judy Peiser.

Legacy, Lineage, & Economic Control

Much of what we know about African American fife and drum music today we can attribute to the openness and willingness of Othar Turner (1908-2003) to share his life with his community, researchers, media, and fans alike. He became an ambassador of his community and his tradition by travelling and performing throughout North America. Unlike other fife and drum bands from the Deep South, Othar was the most prominent subject of early audiovisual ethnographic recordings. The edited film footage of the ten-minute, color film, “Gravel Springs Fife & Drum” (Ferris, Evans, Peiser 1972) includes the combination of Othar’s spoken narrative over images of his daily life and musical performances on his farm near Senatobia, Mississippi.

Turner reported first hearing the fife and drums at local church picnics in the Gravel

Springs community where he lived the majority of his life. He indicated that he learned by watching and later imitating others. Turner reported practicing for hours on an old tin tub before moving onto the drum by 1925 (Mitchell 1971, 32-33). His first encounter with a fife was hearing a field hand named Kid Mavery play. Turner reported that Mavery played an 8-hole fife that Turner found difficult to play. He persevered, however, and created his own homemade, 5-hole cane fife that he learned to play by rote (Mitchell 1971, 33).

Othar performed at two main fife and drum public performances each year. These events were Independence Day (July 4) and Labor Day (the first Monday in September) picnics. Originally, Turner participated in Independence Day fife and drum performances at L. P. Buford's store, a community gathering place down the road from the Turner farm (Mitchell 1971, 49), while the Labor Day picnics marking the end of the cotton harvest have been held at the Turner farm since 1961 (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010). He played drums in numerous ensembles but by the early 1970s Turner began taking the lead fifer role and formed the Rising Star Fife & Drum band, naming it after a Gravel Springs Methodist Baptist Church up the road from his farm (Bobbi Turner, pers. com., April 23, 2010).

Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band originally included three drums (two kettle or snare drums and a bass drum) and a 5-hole handmade cane fife. All instruments were played standing up. The fife was played in a way similar to that used for a transverse flute. The drums were strapped to the player's side whether they were kettle, snare, or bass drums (Ferris 1982, 161). Public fife and drum performances were

highly social local community events where people would interact and dance with the fifer and drummers, drink, eat barbeque, and socialize with friends and family over the course of two full days (usually the Friday and Saturday of the holiday weekend).

Ethnographic interest in Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band continued to grow from the 1972 “Gravel Springs Fife and Drum” film onward. Band members were subjects of audiovisual documentary-style projects including: (1) Alan Lomax’s 1978 film, “The Land Where the Blues Began,” and (2) a 1982 episode of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood entitled “The Ups and Downs of Friendships.”

Fred Rogers (1928-2003), an ordained Presbyterian minister and social activist, was the host of a Pittsburgh based public television children’s broadcast, “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.” It premiered in 1968 and ran eight hundred and ninety-five episodes before it ended in 2001. Rogers received numerous awards including Lifetime Achievement Awards from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences as well as the TV Critics Association (The Internet Movie Database 2011). He was considered a pioneer in understanding the power of television and the encouragement children needed to learn about the world around them. When he was inducted into the Broadcast Hall of Fame he said, “we can either choose to use the powerful tool of television to demean human life or we can use it to enrich it” (Everhart 2003).

There is scant documentation after the appearance of Othar Turner, Jessie Mae Hemphill, and Abe Young on “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” in 1982. The period of time between 1983 and 1992 may mark a turn in the relationship between the Turner family

and outside interests (e.g., researchers, film makers, media). One of the influences in this change was likely the relationship the Turner family formed with Jim Dickinson.

Jim Dickinson (1941-2009) was a producer, engineer, musician, and social activist in the Southern United States. Dickinson was part of the Memphis and Nashville music scenes in the 1950s and 1960s, most notably with Sun Records. He was the recipient of numerous lifetime achievement awards in music and production, and held deep ties in the music industry (Ankeny 2011). In the early 1990s, Dickinson settled in North Mississippi with his sons, Luther and Cody, and opened up Zebra Ranch recording studio (Fuhrman 2010).

The music market changed significantly through the last decade of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Technological advancements prompted a sharp decrease in record sales that, in turn, opened the market to independent music creation, recording, and publishing. Jim Dickinson, Zebra Ranch, and Luther Dickinson produced the first independent recordings with Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum as part of Jim Dickinson's grassroots community initiative, "Delta Experimental Projects." A series of recordings completed at Othar Turner's farm between 1992 and 1997 was eventually released in 2001 under the title, "Everybody Hollerin' Goat" (Turner 2001, 7), a reference to part of the "Turner Family Picnic" menu. Birdman Records, an independent record label owned in part by Dickinson, distributed the album.

However, prior to the release of "Everybody Hollerin' Goat," the Dickinson family was involved in a compact disc project, "Othar Turner & the Afrossippi Allstars: 'From Senegal to Senatobia': Featuring the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band" that combined the mu-

sical forces of Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum with African drummers living in Chicago and a kora player from Senegal (Turner 2000, 15). It was recorded at the Turner farm and the Zebra Ranch recording studio and was distributed by Birdman Records. Jim Dickinson wrote liner notes for the album. They are provocative in content and style. Here he weaves mystery, religion, and belief systems about this music, while taking aim at scholars and folklorists who he believes diminish the magic of the music:

> When Lomax came south with the white man's bag of beads, Otha and Fred McDowell were next door neighbors. For too many years the private property of scholars and folklorists collected, archived and compiled. Otha is a human treasure merging life and art into a single testimony. Master musician, mystical goat dancer. Otha Turner glows in the dark and moves like a cat. His eyes see your sorry soul. His words hang heavy in the air, full of ghosts, haunted by holy fact and simple truth. A musical genius whose instrument is a bamboo cane fishing pole. (Turner 2001, 1)

Although the notes acknowledge both military and African roots of this music, Dickinson encourages the listener to "(f)orget the categorized, preconceived notions of folklore and musicology. This is not a return to anything. This is exploration!" (Turner 2001, 1). Whether in agreement or not, Dickinson's notes reflect the sentiments expressed to me by the Turner family regarding research projects and may support my hypothesis of the family's move toward increased artistic and economic control of their cultural product.

The trusted friendship and musical relationship between the Dickinsons and the Turners in addition to Jim Dickinson's far-reaching music industry contacts, eventually drew interest from Academy Award winning director, Martin Scorsese. These interconnections resulted in the music of Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum being featured on the soundtrack of Miramax's blockbuster hit, "Gangs of New York" (2003), directed by Martin Scorsese.

Martin Scorsese graduated from film studies at New York University in 1964. He has directed numerous movies that are usually set in New York, and he has been the recipient of filmmaking awards including an Academy Award in 2006. Scorsese is best known for interesting approaches to filmmaking including lighting, frame, slow motion techniques, graphic violence, and carefully selected diagetic music where the musical source is visible (The Internet Movie Database 2011).

The appearance of Turner's audio recording "Shimmy She Wobble" and "Late At Midnight, Jus' A Little ′For Day" in Miramax's blockbuster "Gangs of New York" was a sound financial decision for the Turner family that generated much needed immediate and long-term income. Othar Turner received eighty thousand dollars for the right to use his audio audio recording in the film (Fuhrman 2010). Turner also received increased public attention leading to a dramatic increase in attendance at the yearly "Turner Family Picnic" (Turner 2010). It also led to the release of "The Blues" – a seven DVD and a six CD boxed-set – which included a feature on Othar in one of the DVDs entitled "Feel Like Going Home: A Martin Scorsese Production" (Scorsese 2003).

Before his death, Othar performed at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, recreating a "Mississippi Picnic." He died in 2003 before he could fully realize the benefits of his musical and economic contributions to his family and community. He was publicly recognized by a National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Award, Smithsonian Lifetime Achievement, and with Charlie Patton Lifetime Achievement Award (Turner 2005 and Music Maker Relief Foundation 2011).

Othar Turner brought his family and community unprecedented attention, renewed interest in fife and drum music, and increased economic gain. His memory remains strong in North Mississippi, as evidenced by posthumous film releases including Scott Jennison's independent short documentary, "King of the Fife" (2009), and an independent video entitled "Othar Turner and Sharde Thomas: 'Remembering Otha Turner' " (2003) (BluesFilm1 2008). At the Turner Family picnics Othar's image is still in demand and sold on T-shirts, ball caps, posters, and postcards. Eight years after his death, Turner's iconic status remains. His memory is used to inspire the next Rising Star Fife & Drum generation, now led by his granddaughter, Sharde Thomas.

Sharde Thomas (also known as Sharde Evans) was born in 1991 and began playing the fife at the age of five (Steber 1999, 11) under the mentorship of her grandfather, Othar. She reports that she watched her grandfather playing the fife and began to learn by imitating him (Baretta 2009, 32). He soon realized that Sharde, of all his grandchildren, would be the person to carry on the tradition, and he took an active role in mentoring her fife skills (Baretta 2007, 32). Sharde participated in her first audio recording in 2000 as part of the "Otha Turner & the Afrossippi Allstars: 'Senegal to Senatobia' Featuring the Rising Star Fife an Drum Band" project. She was also featured alongside her grandfather around the same time in an independent film "Wayne County Ramblin' " (Rose 2005). She was also part of the Corey Harris's 2003 audio recording, "Mississippi to Mali," filling in for Othar who passed on before the recording could be completed. On that disc in particular, Thomas sang and played fife on two tracks: "Station Blues" (traditional blues song) and "Back Atcha" (an original song).

Since those early recordings, Sharde has continued the path of balancing economic realities and becoming an independent musician. She is completing her second year of college toward a degree in Children's Education (Thomas 2010) and continues to be enthusiastic about keeping the tradition alive as well as creating new works of art (Baretta 2009, 32). By the end of 2010, Sharde released an independent album entitled "What Do I Do?" She recorded the album with trusted musical friends, Ricky and Micol Davis of the Nashville duo, Blue Mother Tupelo. The material for the album is a combination of original and traditional songs among the Rising Star Fife & Drum repertoire although none of the band members are a part of this recording. In fact, the drum rhythms normally played on snare and bass drums held military style are played by the project producer on a standard drum kit. Sharde is making full use of social media networks (e.g., Facebook, YouTube) and distributes her project independently through CD Baby (cdbaby.com). She continues to perform at Turner family picnics (public and private) as well as neighboring festivals including the Sunflower Festival, North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic, Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival, and others.

As stated previously, this thesis is about ideologies inherent in a producer's representation of African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi. My scholarly role is to produce a representation of prior representations about this musical tradition. As such, I hold the legal copyright of my original thoughts written in this thesis and, in the spirit of transparency and reflexivity, I must include myself in this historical section and in the concluding chapter where I interpret the frame I have used and the ideologies evident in my approach.

In 2008, the Canada Council for the Arts funded a six-month period of exploration, education, and training to further my career as a professional acoustic blues woman. I was at a crossroads in my career having released two full-length compact discs of original material, touring nationally, and wanting to invest more energy in learning about the blues genre and my place in the story of blues women.

I had completed some study of blues history and was aware of the current lack of representation of the artistic contributions of blues women. It concerned me that opportunities for live performances were increasingly limited and that past and present literature and recordings were mostly dedicated to male artists. I wondered who the pioneering women in blues were and why they seemed to be forgotten. I also wondered if there were many blues women in Mississippi and how they were expressing their artistry?

A short time after settling in Clarksdale, Mississippi, “Birthplace of the Blues,” I realized that there were some African American female singers in Mississippi but none I could find who played an instrument, sang, and wrote their own music – at least not publicly. I spent a week at the Blues Archives at the University of Mississippi and formed a friendship with the curator Greg Johnson. I discussed my ideas with him and he introduced me to the music of Hill Country blues woman, Jessie Mae Hemphill. I researched her career and in the process, encountered a YouTube video of a young girl playing a fife and dancing at the encouragement of her grandfather. I later realized the significance of the film, music, and performers.

Shortly after returning to Canada, I delivered an informal presentation for the Canadian Centre of Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta and discovered that I had a

desire to pursue intensive study of North Mississippi fife and drum music in addition to continuing the study of female blues musicians.

CHAPTER THREE:
AUDIO RECORDINGS: MUSIC, IMAGES, AND WORDS

Framework for Interpretive Analysis

In this thesis I use the term 'audio recording' to refer not only to the sound recorded product taken from various settings (*e.g.*, live concerts, studio recordings, field recordings) but also to the ways that this sound is represented through supporting images and words. In other words, 'audio recording' refers to total recorded package.

Part of the total experience of relating to music includes the physical packaging that holds the recording. This includes the graphic design, photographic images, album title, font style, color palette, texture, and liner note content. These aspects of the music product are often overlooked, yet their influence on the consumer is significant. In the case of newly purchased compact discs, plastic 'shrink wrap' stretches over the complete package for protection of the cover and also acts to prevent admirers from fully engaging with the musical product until after purchase.

In this chapter, I will examine and interpret the representations of North Mississippi fife and drum music as an audio recording package. For organizational and interpretive purposes, I have divided the materials into four categories according to the producer's framework. These groupings are not exclusive and some producers work in more than one framework. It is also acknowledged that there is a team of people who participate in production. However, as mentioned earlier, I have selected the group that seems in alignment with the producer's professional and copyright affiliations.

(1) Academic Representations are associated with producers who formally researched the subject matter on behalf of a governmental or academic organ-

ization. Material gathered usually includes field recordings, photographs, interviews, and written ethnography. (In Chapter Four, this also includes video and film footage.)

(2) Educational Representations are created by producers who script a storyline with the primary intention of public education.

(3) Independent Artistic Representations are created by producers who are acting to capture a performance either for self-promotion or to network with other interested parties (*e.g.*, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace posts).

(4) Commercial Entertainment Industry Representations are made by producers who produce the product for the purposes of distribution through the music industry with the goal of economic gain and personal artistic recognition.

My assessment of the complete audio recorded package will include a description of (1) graphic design (including color palette and use of photographic images); (2) album copy (including liner notes, production details, and legal protection), and (3) quality and content of the audio recording.

Academic Representations

"Afro-American Folk Music from Tate and Panola Counties, Mississippi" (2000)

"Afro-American Folk Music from Tate and Panola Counties, Mississippi" is a compact disc distributed by Rounder Records Corporation in 2000. This is an enhanced version of a previous release by the Recording Laboratory at the Library of Congress in 1978 (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress 2000).

The compact disc is in a plastic jewel case that has a front insert (slides into the front plastic grooves of a compact disc case) and a tray card (sits in behind the compact disc holder tray and the back plastic piece). There is also a sixty-four page booklet written by David Evans. Both slide into a thin cardboard protective sleeve with identical out-facing graphics as the jewel case insert and tray as well as the outward panels of the booklet. The graphic design is simply styled and sparse with most titles written in capitalized letters. All photos are black and white and focus the graphic design. Green, beige, and black colored boxes and words overlay the photos where appropriate. Of twenty-one photos used throughout the package, seventeen are of Othar Turner and his family. Photographic images show male African American musicians performing for each other and dancing toward the drum with pelvic gestures (see Figure 3.1). Meanwhile, women

Figure 3.1. "Afro-American Folk Music from Tate and Panola Counties, Mississippi" Back Cover (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress 2000)

Figure 3.2. 'Good Time Girls' (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress 2000)

are depicted as mothers, observers, and as 'good time drinking' women (see Figure 3.2).

The album copy is extensive and includes a general introduction, introduction to the song track, location of the recording, the name of the person who recorded the music, description of the artist and, at times, song lyrics, and instrument tunings. Rounder Records Corporation own the copyright and publishing rights of the album and, although it does not indicate it outright, the person who recorded the song maintains copyright of the original recording.

Regarding North Mississippi fife and drum music, Evans states that:

> A separate fife and drum tradition has been recorded in Harris and Talbot Counties in Georgia, and a type of fife and drum music is also played on some of the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean. Reports of blacks playing fife and drum music in local militia units date back to the British colonial times. Their music, which was probably almost indistinguishable from that of their white counterparts, consisted of marches and the popular tunes of the time. Blacks continued to play in such units through the Civil War, after which military fife and drum music was largely replaced by brass band music. Fife and drum music, however, lingered on in some parts of the South and has been adapted to the changing needs of black

> folk communities. (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress 2000, 22)

There are a total of fourteen music tracks listed including a range of African American, male and female musicians from the North Mississippi region. The recordings have been digitally enhanced to reduce extraneous sounds and equalize the audio output. The song of interest to this thesis is Alan Lomax's recording of Sid Hemphill's Band playing "After the Ball Is Over" near Sledge, Mississippi on August 15, 1942. Joining fifer Sid Hemphill is Lucius Smith and Alec Askew on snare drums and Will Head on bass drum.

"After the Ball Is Over" was a highly successful Tin-Pan Alley hit for composer, Charles K. Harris, in 1892 (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and the Library of Congress 2000, 20). How Hemphill learned this song is unknown. However, he was a travelling musician on the vaudeville circuit with Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries and may have learned it as a part of the performance repertoire as performances often included popular songs and dances of the day in order to attract audiences.

Hemphill's recorded performance of "After the Ball Is Over" is musically fascinating (see Figure 3.3) as "the bass drum is restricted to keeping time, while the snare drums play practically in unison and exhibit little improvisation and no syncopation. The fife departs little from Harris's published melody" (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and the Library of Congress 2000, 26). Further to his assessment, I suggest that this music sounds like a melodic marching song. Not only is the timing 'square', but there are also regular two-bar phrases of equal length. The approach to the drums is straightforward and the

“After the Ball Is Over”

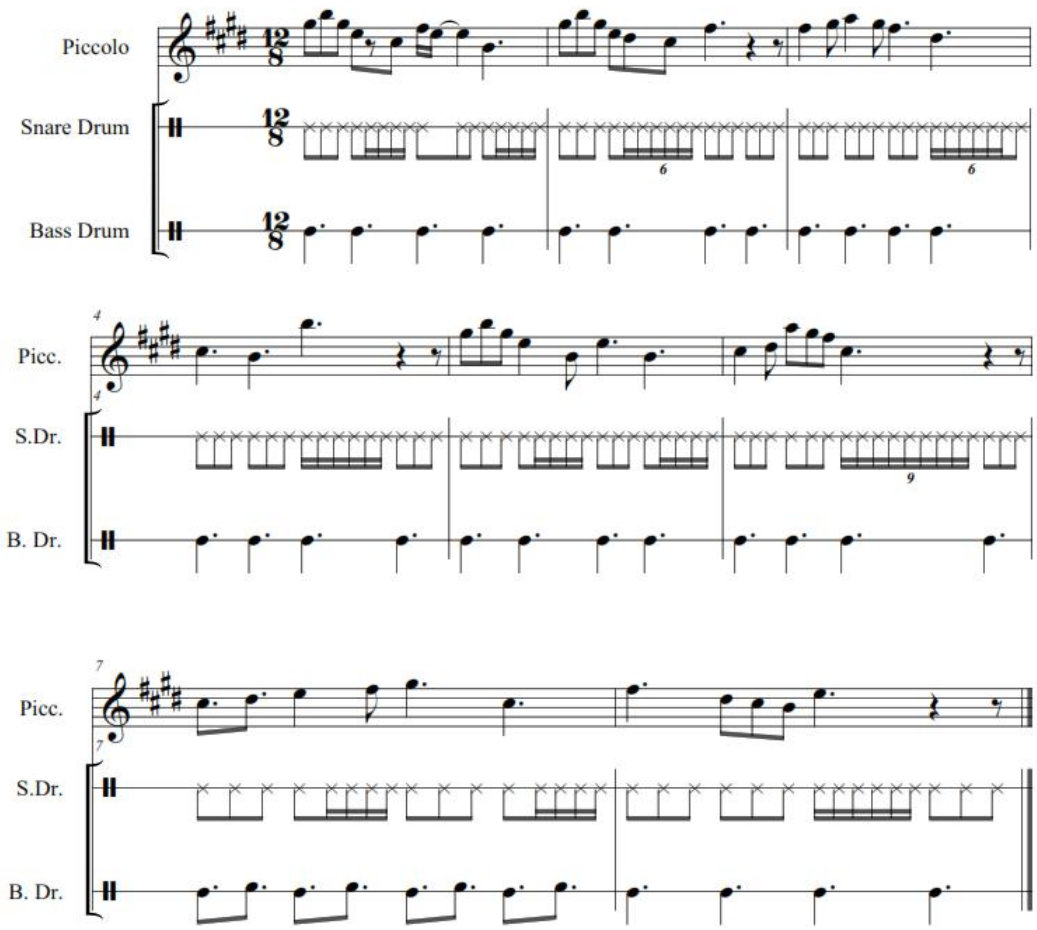

Figure 3.3. “After the Ball Is Over” Transcription - Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, and John Newton (Lomax, Evans, Thurber, and The Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture 2000)

standard military drumming rudiments are present although they do not have the level of precision one would expect of military fife and drum approaches (John Newton, pers. com., March 22, 2011).

“Sounds of the South” (1959)

“Sounds of the South” is a ‘LP’ (long play) record I viewed and listened to at the Blues Archive at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi. It is one of seven-

volumes in the Southern Folk Heritage Series recorded by Alan Lomax for Atlantic Records Corporation in 1978.

The album packaging includes the cardboard record cover, a thick, plastic record in a thin paper envelope, and a two-page doublesided album copy. The graphic design is simple, and includes the album title written in capital letters on a color palette of beige with burgundy accents. It includes the Atlantic Records logo and cataloguing system (not in sight due to album ratio to scanner). There is one color photograph of two African American men against an open sky (see Figure 3.4). One is playing the blues harp (harmonica) and the other playing a steel string guitar. Album copy includes an introduction by Gary Kramer, an introduction by Alan Lomax, and a listing of the songs on each side of the album with Lomax's interpretation of the origins of the song.

The songs recorded for this album are Lomax's field recordings and he (now his estate) maintains copyright of this material. I listened to the album through a high fidelity

Figure 3.4. "Sounds of the South" Partial Album Cover (Lomax 1959)

“Hen Duck”

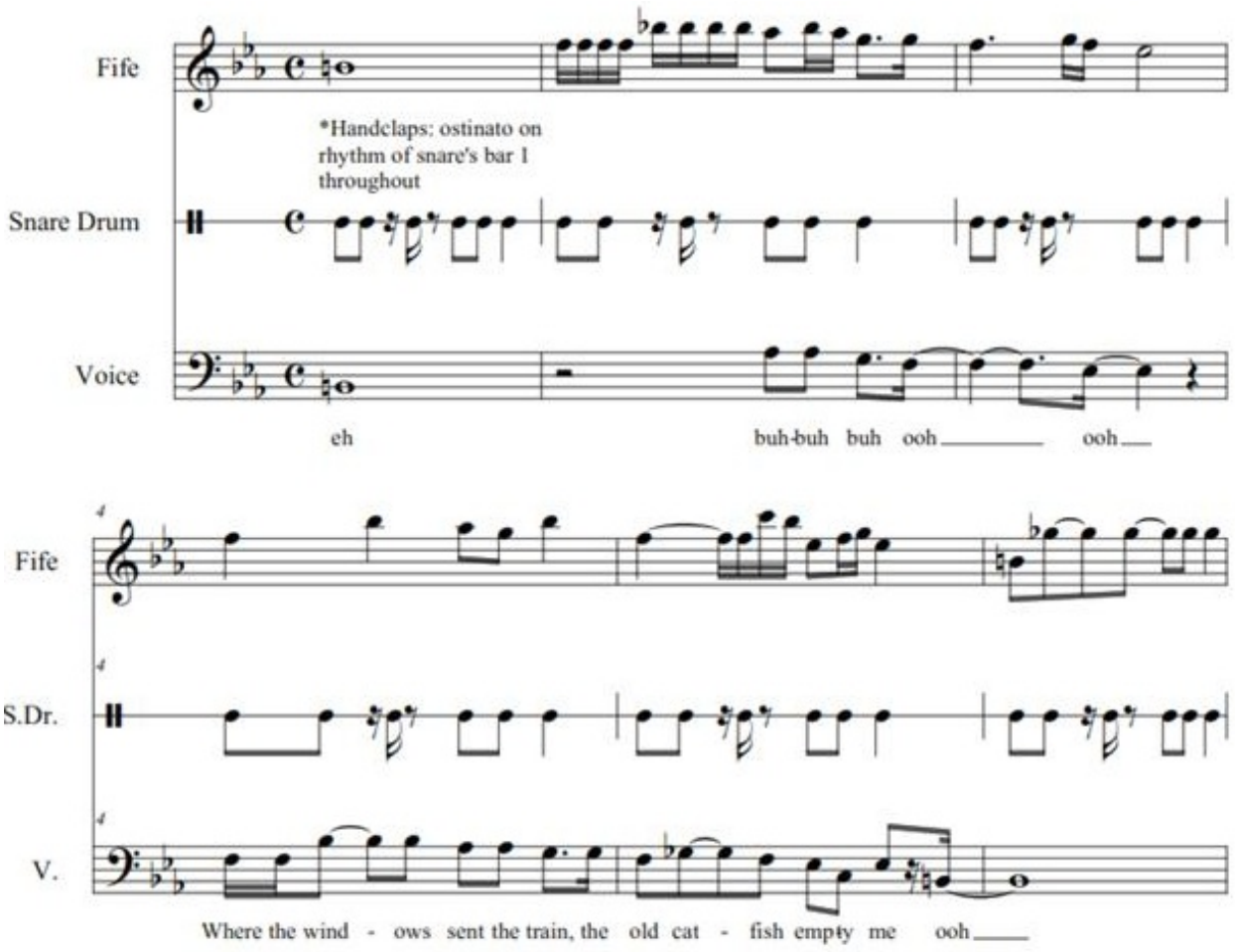

Figure 3.5. “Hen Duck” Transcription - Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, and John Newton (Lomax 1959)

turntable that allowed for speed and pitch correction. The song I was interested in was an old African American folksong entitled “Hen Duck” performed by the Young Brothers who I knew to be fife and drum legends from North Mississippi.

“Hen Duck” is performed by Ed Young on fife, Lonnie Young on bass drum, Lonnie Junior on snare drum, and three nearby neighbor women who provide hand-claps. Lomax describes the song as “country dance music of the Mississippi hills as primitive as “Wave The Ocean,” but clearly African” (Lomax 1959, 3). He continues to describe

possible military influences on the fife and drum musical style then states that "(n)egroes usually bend any music to their traditional pattern, and here Ed and Lonnie produce a sound that is more African than anything previously recorded on this continent" (Lomax 1959, 3).

This song includes varied musical features including polyrhythms, syncopation, and hand-claps (see Figure 3.5). Overall, the scale straddles the line between being major and minor although the melody is clearly in a major scale. The phrases are not as regular in length and a measure of two may be skipped as part of improvisation.

Educational Representations

"Othar Turner and the Afrossippi Allstars: 'From Senegal to Senatobia' Featuring the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band" (2000)

"Otha Turner & The Afrossippi Allstars: 'From Senegal to Senatobia' Featuring the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band" was the first release of two albums by Othar Turner as part of a special project headed by Jim Dickson entitled "Delta Experimental Projects" (Turner 2000). This project was a grassroots, community initiative to assist obscure, independent musicians in Mississippi in recording their music and to build their music networks through intercultural collaborations. The intention behind "Delta Experimental Projects" was not driven by profit as much as it was driven by education (Turner 2000).

This particular recording attempted to blend Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band with a Senegalese kora musician and other African American and Anglo American musicians who played varied instruments such as the dundun drum, djembe drums, and steel string bottleneck slide guitar. The album package includes a profes-

sional photo of Othar Turner on the front and on the back is a group with a young Sharde Thomas holding a fife and standing front and centre apart from the group. Both the cover and back tray card are inserted into the plastic jewel case have a light green overlay giving it a tarnished appearance. The beige font style has a worn appearance and all copy is written in block letters. Photos inside the booklet are informal shots taken around the Turner farm during the field recording. In the center of the booklet is a group photo (see Figure 3.6) and viewers can see the varied instrumentation including the bass, djembe, snare and dundun drums, as well as the kora, cane fife and steel string guitar held by musicians of various ages, gender, and ethnicities.

Jim Dickinson is the author of the liner notes for this audio recording. He describes the project as “a recording of cultural collision-special people in a special place” (Turner

Figure 3.6. “Afrossippi Allstars” (Turner 2000) Left to right: Abe Young, Morikeba Kouyate, Musa Sutton, Manu Walton, R. L. Boyce, Sharde Thomas, Bernice T. Evans, Matthew Rappaport, Aubrey Turner, Othar Turner, K. K. Freeman, Rodney Evans, Luther Dickinson and Andre Evans.

“Stripes”

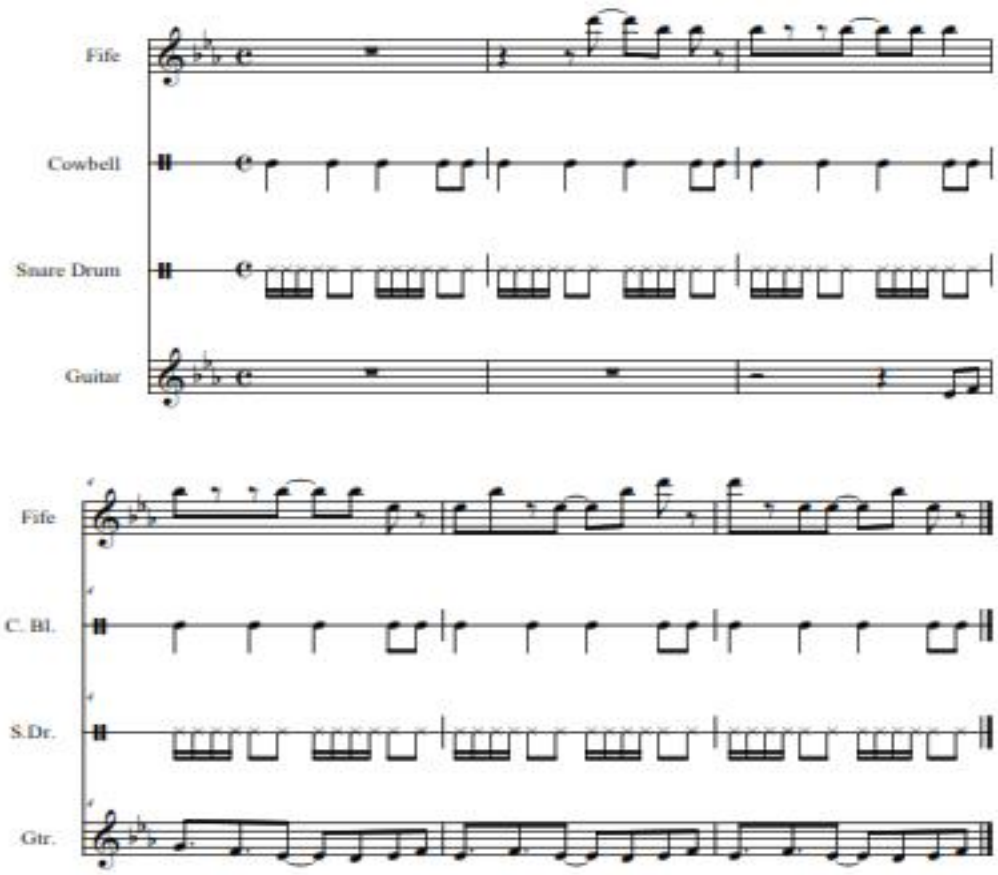

Figure 3.7. “Stripes” Transcription - Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, & John Newton (Turner 2000)

2000, 14) among Chicago-based African drummers, a kora player from Senegal, two Anglo American musicians, and Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band.

Dickinson’s informal style of writing weaves personal and regional politics with poetry and mystery. “Like Baby Dionysus reaching for the grapes, the girl babies dance down front in the light while the couples stay back in the shadows all moving to the heartbeat rhythm” (Turner 2000, 14). He encourages listeners to “(f)orget the categorized, preconceived notions of folklore and musicology. This is not a return to anything. This is exploration! World Boogie is coming!” (Turner 2000,14). There is scant information about the

production process or team. Both copyright and publishing rights are owned by independent record label, Birdman Records.

There are a total of eight song tracks on the album and they are mostly songs from the Rising Star Fife & Drum repertoire (e.g., “Shimmie She Wobble” and “Station Blues”). Two songs, “Stripes” and “Sunu,” feature African percussive syllabic rhythmic interests that “compensates for the absence of melody or the lack of melodic sophistication” (Nketia 1974,125). The songs’ origins are not cited in the album copy and are unknown.

“Stripes” (see Figure 3.7) is four minutes and forty-two seconds in length. It is in the key of E flat and performed at a tempo of one hundred and twenty in 4/4 time. The song begins with a combination of snare, bass, and djembe drumming forming the rhythm section. That is quickly overlayed with the kora and cane fife. Later, they are joined by the bottleneck slide steel string guitar. The fife melody is repetitive and tends to alternate almost entirely between two or three notes (the E flat, B flat, D of the diatonic major scale).

“Everybody Hollerin’ Goat” (2001)

“Everybody Hollerin’ Goat” is the second recording by Othar Turner produced as part of the “Delta Experimental Projects.” This recording took place at Othar Turner’s farm in Tate County, Mississippi between 1992 and 1997 (Turner 2001).

Graphically, the album is presented in a simple and organized style incorporating sepia toned filters over black and white photographs. There is minimal use of red-orange highlights on the cover of the album (see Figure 3.8) and this color becomes the back-

ground of the tray card. This has the effect of making the packaging look like a whole unit. There is also a Birdman Records logo on the front of the album insert and on the disc. Copyright and publishing rights are attributed to Birdman Records, the same independent record company that owns the previous album described above.

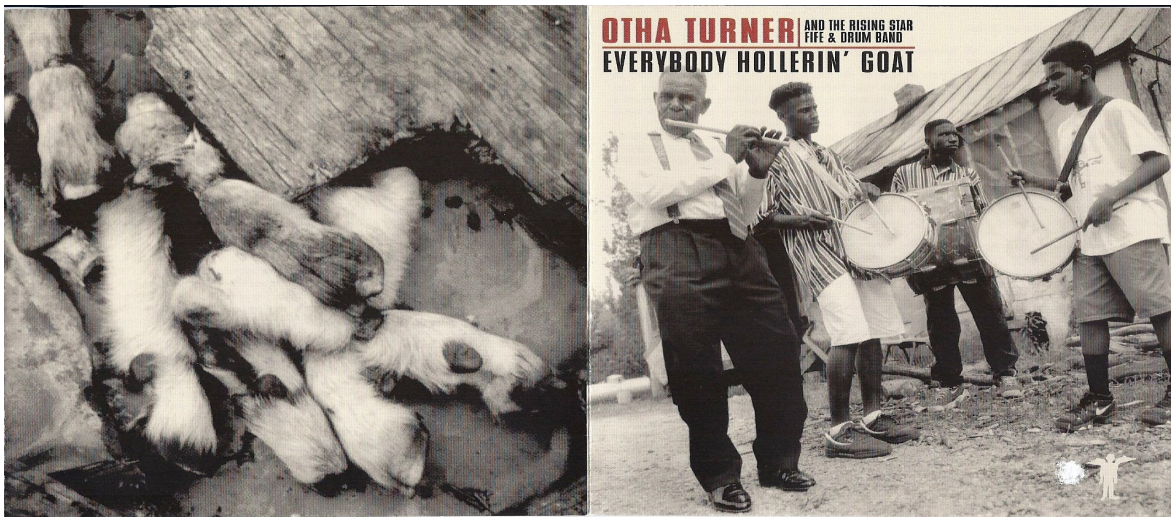

Figure 3.8. "Everybody Hollerin' Goat" Album Insert (Turner 2001)

Robert Gordon wrote non-traditional liner notes opting instead for a narrative entitled "Let Us Eat Goat." He begins by describing the landscape around Gravel Springs followed by a description of the fife and drum performance at the "Othar Turner Picnic." He weaves poetic interpretation and quotes Turner within that description.

> "You makes the fife do what it do," says Othar Turner, taking the magic off of the instrument and putting it in his fingertips. "You know your cane with your fingers. You put that cane up and start to blowin, and you can put what you got through your mouth into that cane. The fife ain't got but two whistles to it, high and low, you gots to catch something yourself." (Turner 2001)

There are a total of fifteen tracks on this album that seem to include most of the repertoire Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum performed on other recordings. The songs are varied and include the gospel song, "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," folk songs

"Henduck" and "Granny, Do Your Dog Bite?," and, blues songs "My Babe" and "Station Blues." This album includes live performance recordings at a party on the Turner farm. On many of the tracks, one can hear the fire crackling, people talking with each other, and shouts of encouragement to the band.

Independent Artist Representations

"What Do I Do?" (2010)

"What Do I Do?" is an independent release from Sharde Thomas distributed online by CD Baby (physical and digital distribution). The album is copyrighted by Sharde Thomas and was produced by Nashville musicians, Ricky and Micol Davis (Blue Mother Tupelo) in their home recording studio (Fuhrman 2010). Of the thirteen recorded tracks, ten were written by Thomas.

There are many noteworthy features of the audio recording. The first are varied musical approaches incorporating Thomas's interest in rhythm and blues, hip hop, and blues music. She incorporates fife and drum style music into her original material on

Figure 3.9. Sharde's Album Cover (Thomas 2010)

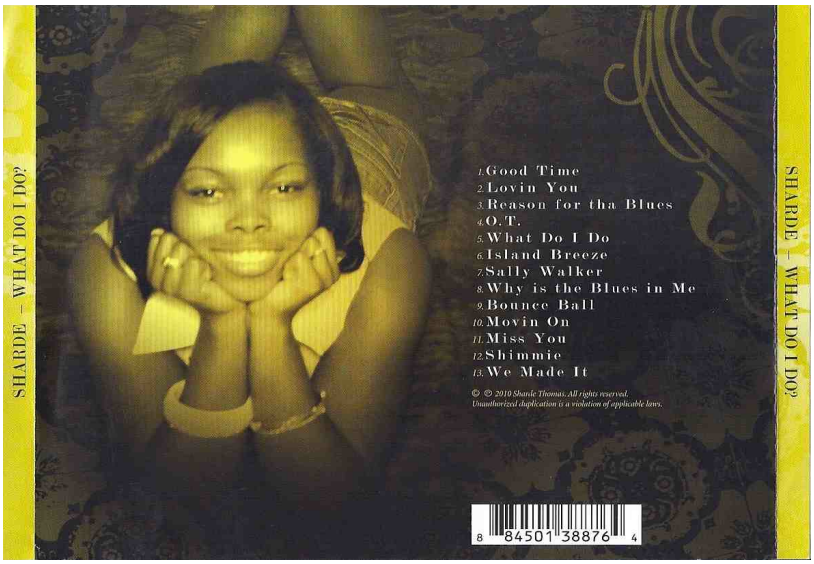

Figure 3.10. Sharde's Tray Card (Thomas 2010)

occasion. Second, she plays the fife and keyboards but opts for a drum kit played by Ricky Davis in place of the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble. Third, the photographs and graphics are professional looking and there are no other images than those of Sharde. This presentation suggests that Sharde views this album as an independent project. The color palette is a golden yellow screen over a black paisley patterned background. The effect is a feminine, professional, eye catching, uniform product (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Finally, this album title suggests that Thomas is unsure how best to carry on the Turner family music legacy (Fuhrman 2010) and some of the titles that may suggest her personal process after her grandfather's death include "O.T.," "Movin' On," "Miss You," and "We Made It."

Thomas recorded thirteen tracks for this album. "Shimmie" (also known as "Shimmie She," "Shimmie She Wobble," or "Shimmie She Wa") (see Figure 3.11) is part of the standard repertoire of the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble. It was a popular dance

“Shimmie”

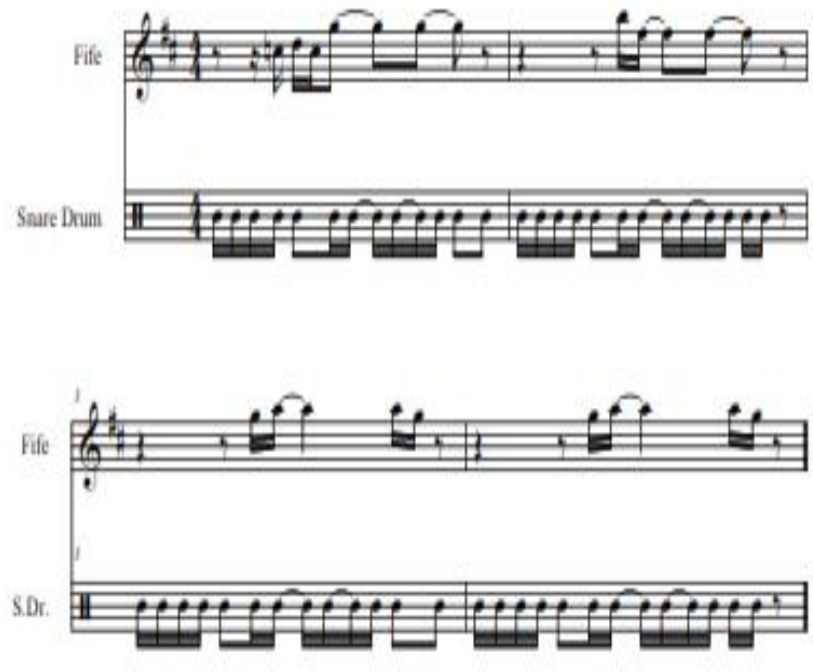

Figure 3.11. “Shimmie” Transcription - Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, and John Newton (Thomas 2010)

in the 1920s. Thomas recorded the song in the key of D major in 4/4 time. The sound is quite ‘tight’ meaning that the drums and fife are in time with each other. The drums seem to march and the tempo is well suited to walking along in time. Thomas plays a rich tone and seems quite confident in her style.

Commercial Entertainment Industry Representations

“The George Mitchell Collection: Volumes 1-45” (2008)

“The George Mitchell Collection: Volumes 1-45” is a boxed-set containing seven compact discs and a booklet. These recordings represent Mitchell’s 1967 fieldwork recordings in Mississippi. For organization and ease of reference, the compact discs are grouped by artist and geographical location and contain between twenty and twenty-nine

tracks per disc. There are one hundred and seventy-four songs in total. Fat Possum Records hold copyright and publishing protection of Mitchell's original recordings.

The graphic design of this album includes a simple and clean professional looking high gloss layout. The color palette is black and white: black background with white lettering. There is also the Fat Possum Records logo on the front of all compact disc cases and the booklet.

All photos used in the audio recording package are black and white credited to George Mitchell. There are photos of all recorded artists, two of Mitchell as a young field journalist, and a recent one of him at his home in Georgia. All photos are clearly labeled with the person's name, location, and date (see Figure 3.12).

The booklet is forty-six pages long and contains an introduction about George Mitchell's career written by Sam Sweet. Mitchell writes the remainder of the liner notes focusing on the recorded performer providing details of the original recording session and an update about what happened musically after the recordings. Specific field notes made by Mitchell during the field recording sessions are italicized.

Disc number five of the boxed set – Volume 35 – contains a rare 1967 recording of the Como Fife & Drum Band from Como, Mississippi. Mitchell recorded four songs in total and lists only Napoleon Strickland as the fifer "with various drummers" (Mitchell 2008, 37). He describes Napoleon as "more than a little slow; you couldn't hold a normal conversation with him. But he was a musical animal. Napoleon could blow for hours on end, without stopping. I think that's one reason he like to blow the fife so much – to communicate" (Mitchell 2008, 37).

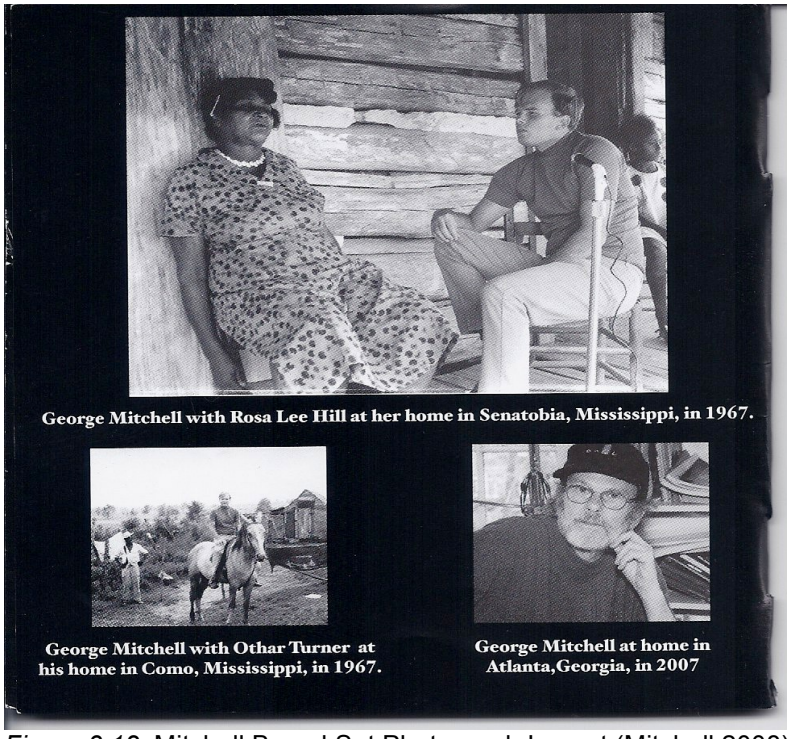

Figure 3.12. Mitchell Boxed Set Photograph Layout (Mitchell 2008)

"Late In The Evening"

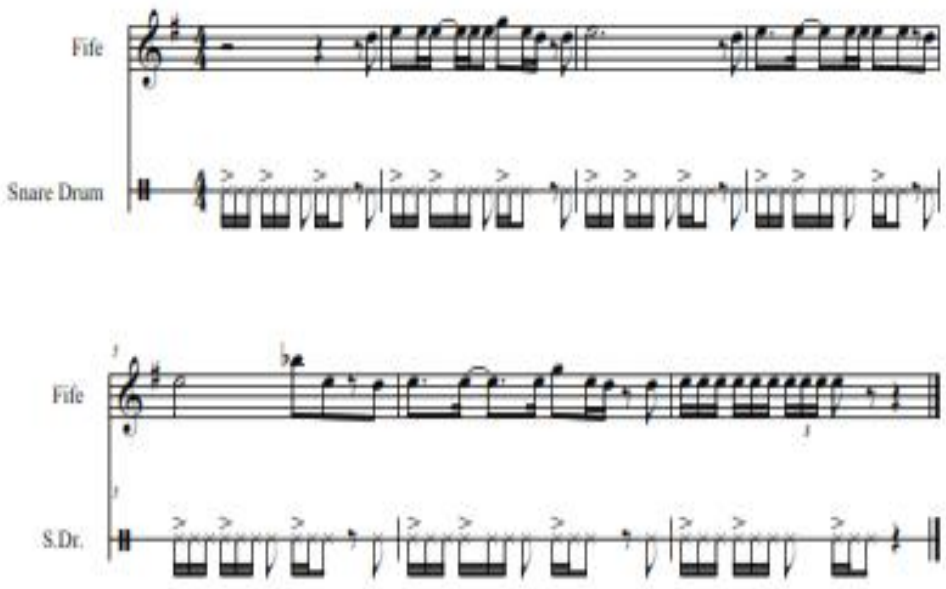

Figure 3.13. "Late In The Evening" Transcription - Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, & John Newton (Mitchell 2008)

Strickland begins his musical approach to the song “Late In the Evening” (see Figure 3.13) with a fife call to which one of the snares responds. He continues the call and the bass and snare drums join him in unison. The drum patterns use a lot of offbeat accents. The sixteenth notes are beamed in groups of three rather than four. They are not actually triplets, but rather show that some accents fall off of the strong (1-2-3-4) beats of 4/4 time. They form the rhythmic foundation for a rich fife melody characterized by repetition, musical embellishments including bends, slurs, and shrills, and a flatted fifth embellishment note (the B flat) commonly found in the blues scale.

“Mississippi to Mali” (2003)

“Mississippi to Mali” is a commercial recording released by Rounder Records and their artist, Corey Harris, in 2003. This album is of interest in this thesis because, of the fifteen tracks recorded, two include Sharde Thomas and another is specifically about Othar Turner.

An anonymous Rounder Records description located on the back of the jewel case states that “(w)ith these recordings, made in the field in Mississippi and in Mali, Corey Harris explores a musical line that unites two continents. These songs find the very heart of the blues by illuminating both the African and the American elements of the music” (Harris 2003).

The package design includes a graphically altered ‘headshot’ of Corey Harris over layed with a photograph that appears to be a still shot of dry, brown, packed ground possibly taken during Harris’s field recordings in Mali. The coloring is brown and black

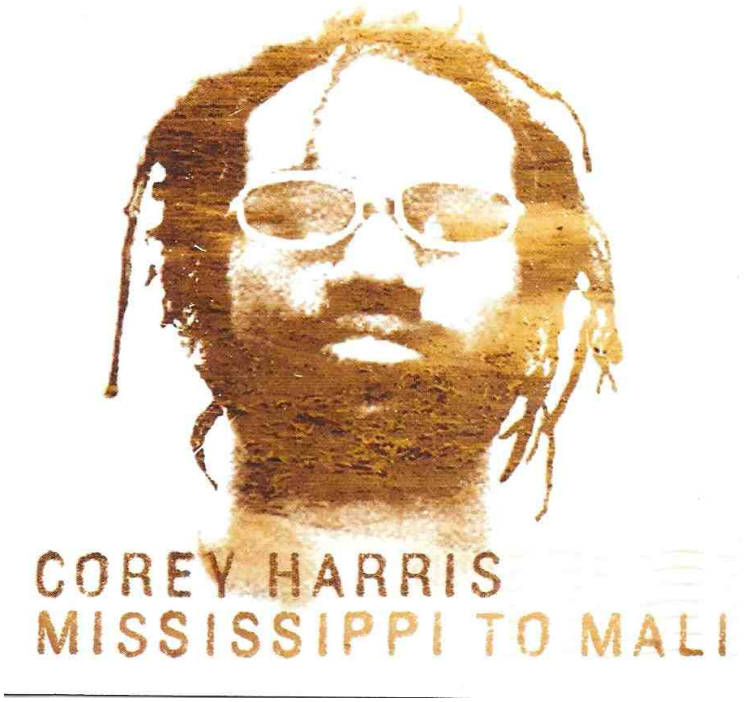

Figure 3.14. "Mississippi to Mali" Album Cover (Harris 2003)

Figure 3.15. "Mississippi to Mali" Booklet - Back Panel (Harris 2003)

with what appears to be a postal mark in the bottom right corner in behind some of the album copy that has also been affected to look like grains of soil (see Figure 3.14).

The booklet insert is a three-panel fold out that extends from the graphic image on the cover over two more panels. On one side is a single photograph of an airplane, two people carrying luggage, and one dressed in what appears to be green African cloth (see Figure 3.15). Album liner notes list song title, songwriting credit, musician and instrument played on the track, as well as production information. Songwriting credits remain with the songwriter listed and Rounder Records Corporation owns copyright and publishing of the album. Harris's personal liner notes indicates his participation in Martin Scorsese's, "The Blues," (a DVD and CD boxed-set discussed in Chapter Four) and his intention to "demonstrate the living links between African music and African-American music, specifically the blues" (Harris 2003, 1).

Sharde Thomas participated in the recording of two songs: an original, "Back Atcha," and a cover of "Station Blues." She plays fife on both songs and is supported by Harris and Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble members R. L. Boyce (lead snare), Rodney Evans (bass snare), Otha Andre Evans (bass drum), and Aubrey Turner (bass drum). The sound quality, editing, and mixing of the field recordings are professional.

"Station Blues" (see Figure 3.16) is also known as the traditional blues song "Sittin' On Top Of The World." Harris and Thomas record this song in the key of F at a tempo of 96 in 4/4 time. The combination of the fife melodic line, drums, and the dobro slide guitar should complement each other but the fife and slide guitar are not in tune with each

“Station Blues”

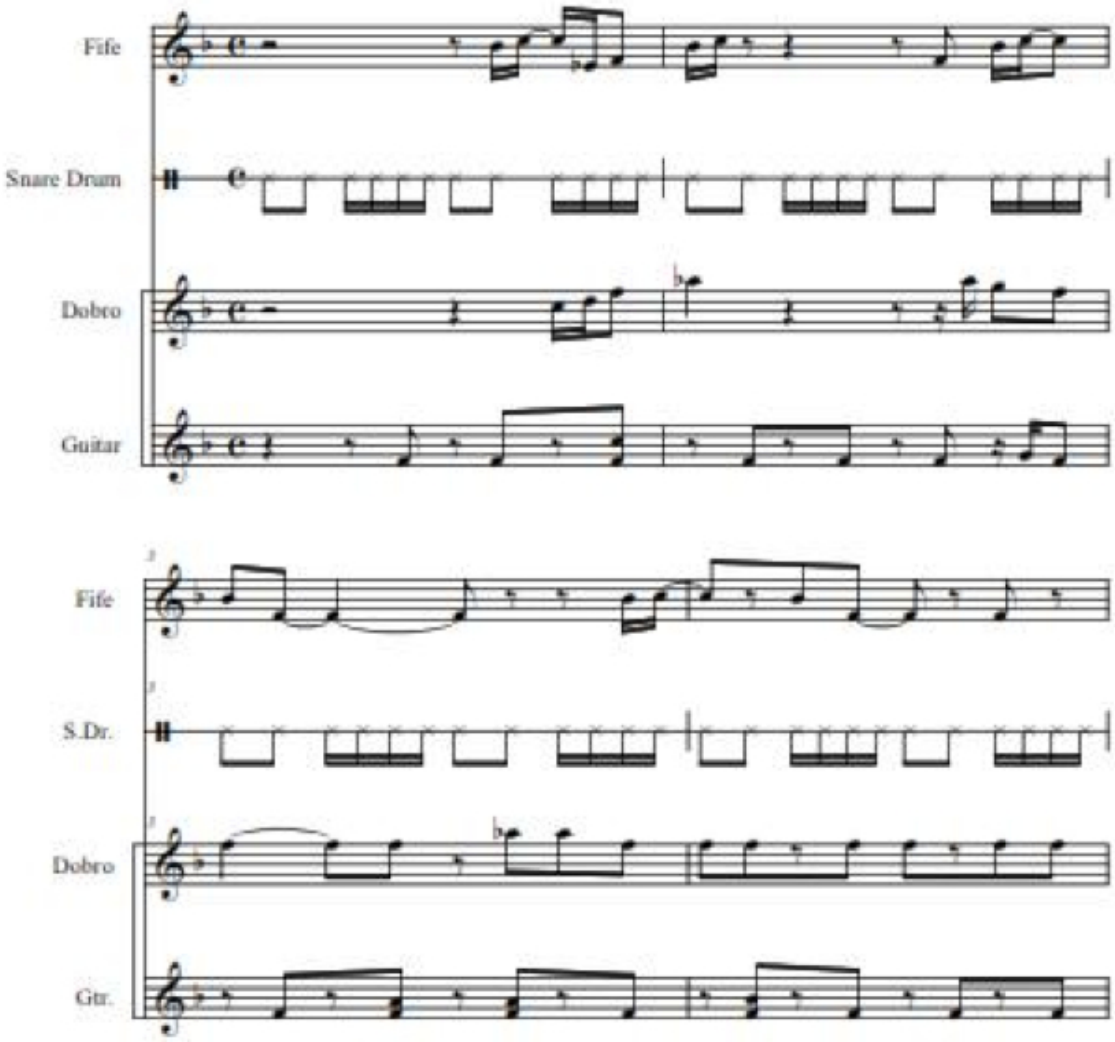

Figure 3.16. “Station Blues” Transcription – Transcription by Kathleen Danser, Matthew Knight, & John Newton (Mitchell 2008)

other. However, the fife does a good job of musical ornamentation making the blues roots of the song stand out.

Discussion

Intragroup Comparisons

Academic Representations of North Mississippi fife and drum music audio recordings included an abundance of liner notes with detailed information about the song and

the artist. In some ways, the performers were secondary to the song based on the organization of album copy. Both Evans and Lomax shared their fieldwork experiences for the benefit of a particular audience who want to establish a base of knowledge about the music and to develop a personal relationship with it. One can see the effect of temporal distance as Evans, in 2000, takes a scientific position in his descriptions whereas Lomax, in 1959, incorporates value laden judgments of the artists and musical origins that are difficult to ignore and equally difficult to prove.

The fife and drum music samples between both albums suggest three things: (1) That different performers have developed their own approach and style; (2) That drum rhythms are varied – “After the Ball Is Over” sounds more military based while “Hen Duck” has polyrhythmic features that may be rooted in African rhythms, and (3) The repertoire includes popular as well as folk songs.

Lomax and Evans have a broad range of field recordings representing male and female African American vocalists and musicians. However, when it comes to the album packaging, there is a disconnection between sound and photographic image representations. Males are depicted in all photographs as musicians while females as non-musicians. While one can see how that would be overlooked in 1959 given women’s social position, it is difficult to overlook forty years later in The Library of Congress reissue.

Educational Representations include field recordings from the “Delta Experimental Project” of the 1990s. The first release, “Othar Turner and the Afrossippi Allstars: ‘From Senegal to Sentatobia’ Featuring the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band,” is a collaboration that seeks to explore the possible connections between West African drumming and

North Mississippi fife and drum music. The rhythms among the drummers do seem to blend well together possibly because of the polyrhythmic features but neither the fife nor the bottleneck slide guitar compliment songs that originate in Africa.

The album packaging for both albums include formal and informal approaches to graphic design. Through sepia toned and black and white photos, color overlay, and font style, the design suggests that the music is a 'rustic' and 'authentic' product from another place in time. Of all the audio recording material chosen, the authors of album copy take artistic license to express poetry, myth, and political positions often to the exclusion of song or artist detail.

Independent Representations includes only one audio recording. As indicated previously, these groupings are general and it could be said that some of the representations could be considered in two or more groups. However, for the purposes of comparison, I have chosen to highlight specific features of the recordings in order to differentiate them. For example, I group Turner's and Thomas's recordings differently because: (1) Turner's albums are produced in the context of a grassroots, community initiative and distributed by an independent record company focused on education about distinct music in North Mississippi, and (2) Thomas's album consists mainly of original material and distributed independently with the intention of personal financial gain.

On the album "What Do I Do?" Sharde is clearly the owner and distributor of her music. She has claimed the music through legal copyright, even those songs that form the traditional Rising Star Fife & Drum repertoire, photographic image, and album title. The packaging and the recorded sound are professional and the focus of the album is on her

original material. In an interview with “Living Blues” magazine reporter Scott Baretta, Sharde says this about her style compared to her grandfather’s style: “I’m just trying to have my own creative style of it. I don’t play that many of his songs, because I can’t play them like him. So I just have to do my own” (Barretta 2009, 4).

Commercial Recording Industry Representations include the perceptions of Mitchell, a freelance journalist, and Harris, an African American musician. This grouping reveals opposite ends of a continuum of North Mississippi fife and drum audio recorded representations. On one hand, Mitchell provides a great degree of detail in descriptions about the musicians he recorded and his impressions of them. On the other, Harris’s liner notes express his political thoughts and feelings about Africa, slavery, and African American musical rootedness. Mitchell’s album photos are mostly of the male and female artists he recorded, while Harris’s album includes one altered photo of his head including a beard, dreadlocks, and sunglasses and another of three African men with their backs turned to the camera. Although the album is entitled “Mississippi to Mali,” there are no photographs of the state of Mississippi or of any of the Mississippi or African musicians on the project. I also wonder about the possible significance of black-white color choices Harris’s (black subject on a white background) and Mitchell’s (white subject on black background) albums. Is this merely a contrast in color or suggestive of a racial divide? A majority of Mitchell’s copy is factual and his field notes reveal personal perceptions that are, at times, judgmental and disturbing.

The musical content on each album is varied and professional sounding even though Mitchell’s recordings were completed in 1967. His recordings focus on individual artists

even if they belong to an ensemble, whereas Harris focuses on and participates in recorded musical collaborations.

Intergroup Comparison

The common features among all audio recorded representations is that they are all prepared for the consumer market as evidenced by record label catalogue numbers and bar codes. With the exception of Thomas's independent album, package designs are sparse, simple, and often suggestive of a 'rustic', 'authentic' product (e.g., green or sepia color overlay). A vast majority of the photographic images are black and white and capture the range of musicians – black and white, male and female – who have interacted with North Mississippi fife and drum music. The musical approaches are also varied incorporating popular, blues, folk, and gospel repertoire.

The differences among the albums seem to occur mostly in the album copy. Albums represented by academic representatives (e.g., Atlantic & Lomax, Rounder & Evans) begin with a presentation about the reputation and achievements by another author. This is followed by extensive musical details written by the academic author that seeks to legitimize his position as if it were scientific fact. Meanwhile, educational, independent, and commercial industry albums present basic, factual, personal information. What is it about ethnographic detail and the interpretations of the author that appeals to the consumer market? Half the albums maintain neutrality about African origins of American fife and drum music while the other half overtly suggested its African connections through the title (*e.g.*, "Othar Turner & the Afrossippi Allstars: 'From Senegal to Senatobia' Featuring the Rising Star Fife and Drum Band" and "Mississippi to Mali") or in the

album copy (*e.g.*, in “Sounds of the South”).

CHAPTER FOUR:
VIDEO AND FILM REPRESENTATIONS

Framework for Interpretive Analysis

The density of audiovisual materials makes it immensely impractical to analyze it to the fullest extent. Future technological advances may allow researchers to provide a full analysis but until that time, I have grouped video and film representations of North Mississippi fife and drum music in the same fashion as in the previous chapter.

In reviewing the audiovisual material, I considered the overall context and performance including visual and audio components to a greater or lesser degree. I created a four-stage process by synthesizing prior photographic image analysis by Collier and Collier (1986), Michel Chion's (1994) work with sound on film, and paying attention omy own perceptions. The stages are not intended to be linear and isolated. They can be used in any order and are meant to stimulate ideas for further exploration.

Stage 1: Sound & Sight Observation (Moving Images): Isolate audio and visual components. For example, listen to the sound first closing your eyes and noting sounds that focus your attention. Second, watch the same segment without sound simply by muting it on your device. Third, listen and watch the sequence together and note observations of your engagement with the material.

Stage 2: Contextual Inventory: Note the ways that sound and image behave. Pay special attention to synchronicity and difference noting duplications, contradictions, and complements (Chion 1994, 190-191).

Stage 3: Interpretive Analysis: Freeze frame audiovisual material where are interested in sound and image intersections. Note the evidence contained on the images and ask questions to direct one's attention (e.g., who is and is not in the frame?).

Stage 4: Final Exposure: Review both audio and visual information in totality noting their organization and the information they contain about the producer's frame. Identify overall patterns and themes for use in further discussion (Collier and Collier 1986, 179).

Academic Representations

"Gravel Springs Fife and Drum" (1972)

"Gravel Springs Fife & Drum" is a ten-minute, twenty-eight second film by ethnomusicologists and folklorists William Ferris (producer/director), David Evans (audio), and Judy Peiser (editing). It was recorded at the Turner family farm and surrounding Gravel Springs community near Senatobia, Mississippi in 1971, edited in 1972, and released by the Center for Southern Culture, founded by Ferris and Peiser, at the University of Mississippi in 1984.

The film has a four-part storyline. The first part is an introduction to Othar Turner and his family members. His wife is cooking while he is sitting at the table in his performance shirt (we see this later in the film) eating the food she has prepared. This scene is followed by Turner dressed in work clothes (e.g., coveralls, rubber boots, shirt and hat) leading a horse. At first the viewer sees Mr. Turner leading the horse, then the scene expands our view of the farm landscape and his ramshackle home. The audio is one of Mr. Turner singing (a capella) an unidentified work song. Next, the viewer sees him on

his horse gathering cane for a demonstration of how he makes a cane fife. The third part is the performance section. This includes a procession to the performance, the music performance, and images of other kinds of music making. Last, Mr. Turner leaves the farmyard on his horse singing the same song from the opening frames.

I note four themes and patterns in this audiovisual representation: disconnection, education, demonstration, and repetition. The most obvious issue is that of audio and visual disconnection. There are only three times when the sound is synchronized with the image: the milk from the milking cow hitting the pail, the girl blowing the horn, and the fife and drum playing.

The narrator of the film is Othar Turner. His vocal tracks are heavily edited but it does give the impression to the listener that they might have a personal relationship with Othar as he educates about his life and music. His narration is not a vocal overdub in post production, it consists of spliced segments of an audio recorded interview completed by David Evans and Judy Peiser as part of the overall project (Ferris 1982). I listened to the full interview at the Blues Archives in University of Mississippi and noted that the producers spliced together a coherent storyline from the wandering thoughts and endearing character of Mr. Turner. What is lost is the easy, charm of Mr. Turner and the ways that his memory was organized and expressed during the interview.

As part of Mr. Turner's education of the viewer, he demonstrates how the cane fife is made from the gathering of cane through the measuring (see Figure 4.1), cutting and burrowing of holes with a hot, thin, metal rod. These sequences are overdubbed with

Figure 4.1. Othar Turner Making a Cane Fife (Ferris, Evans, & Peiser 1972)

segments from the Turner interview that tell a bit of his personal story. Meanwhile, the viewer is watching the harvesting and fashioning of a cane fife that, eventually, Mr. Turner holds position to demonstrate how the fife is held.

The film's climax is presented as a rhythmic frenzy of edited images and sounds that begins with a procession of sorts in the back of a truck and some dressed up folks readying for the performance. Some images are of daily, routine activities that are being repeated, some of musical activities, and some seemingly out-of-place images that suggest another place and time: Napoleon Strickland, a Gravel Springs fife legend, playing the 'diddley bow' (a string slide instrument commonly found in early Mississippi ethnographic records) (see Figure 4.2); a young girl blowing a horn (see Figure 4.3), and a young child holding a tin, coffee-can type object on the shoulder slapping it with wrist flicking common to the playing of a Middle Eastern (dumbek and Irish bodhran) style of

Figure 4.2. Napoleon Strickland Playing a 'Diddley Bow' (Ferris, Evans, & Peiser 1972)

Figure 4.3. Young Girl Blowing a Horn (Ferris, Evans, & Peiser 1972)

Figure 4.4. Young Child Drumming a Tin Can (Ferris, Evans, & Peiser 1972)

drumming (see Figure 4.4). Meanwhile, Turner's actual fife performance that seems to be what the purpose the focal point of the storyline (as evidenced by Othar's performance shirt at the beginning of the scene, cutting the fife, the truck procession, and the performance itself) is not. While the viewer is lead to assume that Mr. Turner is the lead fifer of Gravel Springs Fife & Drum, he does not play the fife during their performance. Instead he is seen playing the snare drum while Napoleon Strickland is fifing (see Figure 4.5). We see in this still frame that the fifer and the drummers are communicating with each other. Their bodies are close together while the fifer is on bended knee playing to both the bass and snare drums. The film quickly ends with Othar Turner riding the horse on the land after the performance.

Figure 4.5. Fife and Drum Performance (Ferris, Evans, & Peiser 1972)

Ferris frames this film as an observation of Othar Turner within the context of his day-to-day life as he interacts with family and community. This suggests to the viewer that Turner's music is an integral part of his life. Ferris takes an almost invisible position in his role as producer. This invisibility is further enhanced by the personal narration of Turner. The effect on the viewer is that they are privy to the thoughts, feelings, and descriptions of Mr. Turner creating some kind of direct relationship with him.

The "Gravel Springs Fife & Drum" reveals its subjective interpretative qualities during the third part, the performance section. The focus on fife and drum music is implicated in various music making images (e.g., blowing horn, tapping tin can drum, 'diddley bow') suggesting 'rustic', 'ancestral' origins. The pace of the images against the audio track is frenetic and repetitive. This is suggestive of stereotypical ideas of ritualized, religious performances.

“The Land Where the Blues Began” (1979)

“The Land Where the Blues Began” was created by Alan Lomax, Worth Long, and John Bishop in 1978 and 1979. The film, produced by the Mississippi Authority for Educational Television, was eventually broadcast on PBS in 1980. The film became an award-winning documentary (Lomax, Long, Bishop 1979) and was screened at festivals eventually being re-edited and re-issued as part of Lomax’s American Patchwork series (Lomax, Bishop, Long 1979). North Mississippi fife and drum music forms approximately three minutes of an entire project. Later, this film title was used by Alan Lomax to name his autobiographical book (Lomax 1993).

It is evident when viewing the film that the overall goal is an educational piece about Mississippi blues because of the content and tone of Lomax’s narration. There are four parts to this audiovisual presentation. The first begins with the narration of an initially invisible (and later seen) subject, an unnamed African American man (master North Mississippi fifer Napoleon Strickland), demonstrating how a fife is made after cutting. His narrative is edited in order to begin the fife and drum music track that is heard before the musical performance is seen.

In the performance, Napoleon Strickland is moving and dancing in an energetic fashion while his physical interaction with the rest of the ensemble is distant and indirectly communicative. The male drummers seem be aware of the camera and often look directly toward the lens. The scan of the drum ensemble is quickly edited with the presentation of two young girls both playing the same bass drum. One is walking forward and

Figure 4.6. Two Girls & a Bass Drum (Lomax, Bishop, and Long 1979)

the other backward but both are playing and are a part of the overall ensemble (see Figure 4.6). This part of the presentation ends with a quick audio and visual transition.

The transition between this image sequence and the next is highlighted by the commanding voice of Alan Lomax. It is a strong, deep, clear and authoritative voice that introduces a fife and drum ensemble, led by Othar Turner, as representative of "Northeast Mississippi Hill Country the fife and drum bands call(ing) the folks to summer picnics looking like the *Spirit of '76* Afro-American style" (Lomax 1959). The "Spirit of '76" references an historical painting by Archibald Willard that depicts the American Revolutionary War (see Figure 4.7).

Through image and narrative, Lomax links African American fife and drum in North Mississippi to the American Revolutionary War. What may be an acknowledgement of its Anglo American roots ends up a disjointed thought between white, military fife and

Figure 4.7. “Spirit of ‘76” Painting (Archibald Willard c. 1875)

varied ages walking side by side. One is playing the fife and the other two snare drums. drum music in the eighteenth-century and black, fife and drum music in the late 1970s. In addition, Lomax’s remarks largely miss the point because nowhere in the painting are African American people represented. The painting is of three Anglo American men of These men are marching, drumming, and, we can assume, playing in unison.

Following the brief procession sequence where women are witness to the performance, the fife and drum ensemble moves into a communal space inhabited solely by black males. The men are seen sitting, playing a game, dancing, and participating in the fife and drum performance led by Othar Turner (see Figure 4.8). All of these interactions

Figure 4.8. Othar Fifing and Male Dancer (Lomax, Bishop, and Long 1979)

Figure 4.9. Solo Male Dancer (Lomax, Bishop, and Long 1979)

are in close proximity indicating a level of comfort with each other and semblance of community – a private ‘men’s club’ of sorts.

Finally, there is dynamic footage of Napoleon Strickland and a fife and drum ensemble performing at a community event that may be a community picnic as suggested by Lomax. The sequences are close up shots of the event and it feels as though the person filming is more a part of the experience than prior segments because of the proximity between the camera and the subject. There are three key components of this footage. The first is a dance move by a tall, lanky, African American man (see Figure 4.9). In Lomax's 1980 video project entitled "Experience Music Project: African American Music Traditions," he identifies this as "an African American man paying homage to the earth just as you find in Africa" (Lomax 1980). The second still frame is an interaction between a female bass drummer and a dancer (see Figure 4.10) who Lomax believes is "saluting the drums" (Lomax 1980). The last still frame shows the continuation of the fife and drum musicians interacting with their enthusiastic crowd. The fifer, drummer and two young black men are dancing together in close proximity (see Figure 4.11).

As there is no evidence to support Lomax's statements, one is left to assume that these are his interpretations alone. Lomax and other film producers have used these film segments in various projects since its debut. The ideologies embedded in his choice of frame and interpretation seems to be concretized as truth when used by another project. Even with misinterpretation, the viewer can still engage with a range of information about North Mississippi fife and drum music that includes females as performers in the tradition, African American dance, and the differences between this music in the context of live performance as compared a staged presentation.

Figure 4.10. Female Drummer (Lomax, Bishop, and Long 1979)

Figure 4.11. Napoleon Strickland and Male Dancers (Lomax, Bishop, and Long 1979)

“Newport Folk Festival” (1966)

“Newport Folk Festival” is a clip taken from the second volume of a 1997 VHS/DVD for sale by Rounder Records entitled “Delta Blues/Cajun Two-Step.” This footage was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1966 and features Ed and Lonnie Young (and an unknown bass drummer) from North Mississippi.

The image and sound are mostly synchronous throughout the film sequence except for a fade edit making way for a vocal overdub at the end and the pitch and speed correction that sounds like a wobbly tire toward the end of the piece. The images are recorded in black and white and are not acted upon through editing.

Ed Young, the lead fifer, and his brother, Lonnie, on snare drum bring a lot of energy to the performance which one would never realize is a part of the Newport Folk Festival because there are no stages or festival participants present. Again, we see a lone fifer and the ensemble in an isolated scene that could be easily mistaken for Mississippi instead of the state of Rhode Island. However, this performance is riveting because of the communication among the fifer and drummers that includes syncopated rhythms, hollering, and dancing. The musicians operate in very close proximity (see Figure 4.12) to the others and their communication is impeccable given the master fifing riffs by Ed Young. Mr. Young’s crouching close to the ground and patting it with his hand while continuing to fife (see Figure 4.13).

The performance is smoothly edited to images of gliding over a lake or ocean at sunset. The sound turns from the awe-inspiring performance to a vocal overdub from an anonymous, soft-spoken, clear, and concise man who refers to what we have just seen

Figure 4.12. The Young Brothers – Close Proximity (Lomax 1966)

Figure 4.13. The Young Brothers – Ground Patting (Lomax 1966)

as representative of “the blues” before he launches into an African proverb and subsequent political statement, “this is the one thing they could never take away from black people” (Humphrey 1997). This vococentric act is more the action of Alan Lomax circa 1978 than of a narrator in 1997 but we find that twenty years later, a similar sentiment is found in reference to fife and drum as early blues music and evidence of Africa in the United States of America.

Educational Representations

“Music of Williamsburg 1960” (1960)

“Music of Williamsburg 1960” is a forty-minute interpretive re-enactment and re-conceptualization of Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia – an early English colony and important North-South battleground during the American Civil War. Both Anglo and African American musical styles are represented in two separate clips. “The film’s director, Sidney Meyers, had a history of producing films that explored race and class” and “(f)or Colonial Williamsburg, it was a landmark step in moving toward an integrated public-program agenda” (Oja 2003, 3). It is noteworthy that the traditional music coordinator for the film was Alan Lomax. He hired many musicians for the project from across the southern United States. One of the musicians was North Mississippi legendary fifer, Ed Young (Oja 2003, 2).

The first series of images are of white soldiers in military uniform playing fifes in unison to a strong 4/4 marching drumbeat. They are depicted as a focused, rigid, and serious troupe that is marching through Colonial Williamsburg in the glorious sunlit day. At one point in this fragment a small well-dressed black boy walks and skips alongside

the marching soldiers (see Figure 4.14). The representation includes a clear size and age differential along racial lines. Anglo Americans are represented as serious adults off to battle and African Americans as happy, playful children with little care in the world.

The second segment is the re-creation of black music making. There are black males and females in a ring dancing to a band consisting of musicians playing the ‘bones’, a banjo, fife, and a traditional-style African drum. They are dressed in colorful clothing

Figure 4.14. White Soldiers and Skipping African American Boy (Cronner 1960)

fashioned in a way to make them look impoverished but dressed for a special event. The musicians are of varied ages, all male, and one, in particular, is missing his forearm and an eye suggesting a handicap. They are positioned against what looks to be a ‘slave shack’ right after the work was done (see Figure 4.15). Music is being played for adult

Figure 4.15. African American Slave Musicians Re-enactment (Cronner 1960)

Figure 4.16. Fifer Gestures to the Ground (Cronner 1960)

males and females who have gathered to sing, dance, and have a good time (there are no children present at the event). The audio track includes call and response style singing and polyrhythmic percussive hand claps. The fifer blows the melody of the song being sung while the drummer dances around him in the center of the circle. Then, the fifer crouches to the ground and with one knee on the ground he reaches back to touch the ground (see Figure 4.16).

"Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" (1982)

"Mister Roger's Neighborhood" was a syndicated children's television show for PBS that ran from 1968-2001. In 1982, host Fred Rogers introduced Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum to national audiences in episode number 1509, "The Ups and Downs of Friendships: Daniel Feels Forgotten."

The scene begins with images of a colorfully painted town model of a neighborhood community. Next we hear the fife and drum music before we see Othar Turner, Abe Young, and Jessie Mae Hemphill playing on a set stage seeming to replicate and old, rural church hall as evidenced by the small stage, pews and benches, stage lights, and raw wood. They are set higher than the audience members who are an unnamed woman and man in addition to Mister Rogers (see Figure 4.17). Mister Rogers invites Othar Turner down from the stage in order to discuss the fife and then moves up onto the stage to enquire about the bass and snare drums. Both Abe Young and Jessie Mae Hemphill (see Figure 4.18) give voice to their musical development and their experiences with their music instrument.

Figure 4.17. Mister Rogers' Staging (Rogers 1982)

Figure 4.18. Fred Rogers and Jessie Mae Hemphill (Rogers 1982)

This film fragment is important to the North Mississippi fife and drum tradition. First, there is transparency of intention. For example, we know that this is an artificial setting based on the introduction of the model town street. There are no noted audio edits and the voices of each person are equal in volume. Second, this is the first time that we hear a woman speaking about her musical lineage and development as a drummer. Third, the stage, as artificial as it is and as removed as it is from the fife and drum picnics, places the ensemble on a higher level.

Independent Artist Representations

"Othar Turner and Sharde Thomas: 'Remembering Othar Turner' "(1999)

"Othar Turner and Sharde Thomas: 'Remembering Othar Turner' " is an independent and informal audiovisual representation created by BluesFilm1 and posted on YouTube in 2008. The actual footage was shot around 1997 (as gauged by the age of Sharde Thomas) on Othar Turner's farm. There is no available information about the producer of film or the YouTube account holder. I made attempts to contact the account holder via email and checked with primary participants but could not locate identifying information or the possible connection to the Turner family. What can be gathered about the producer's role in this film is that they are observing a performance and are not considered part of the community. This is evidenced by the conversation between Othar and Bill, a family friend. Bill says, "what do you say?" and Othar replies, "I reckon they ain't satisfied" (BluesFilm1 1999). The filming is unfocused and of poor quality as are the quality of images posted to YouTube. There are few edits of image and sound and the video

appears relatively raw and unaltered. This video seems like the product of personal video footage by a music fan.

A striking theme running through this film fragment is the lack of energy in the performance of Sharde and Othar, their virtual and physical isolation from the drummers and from those watching. The drum rhythm cycles repeating the same musical structure while Sharde plays a two-note melodic pattern on fife.

What this audiovisual representation does show is fife and drum mentorship in action between Othar and Sharde (see Figure 4.19) In addition, the viewer has the opportunity to see the tenderness between grandfather and granddaughter after Sharde's

Figure 4.19. Othar Encouraging Sharde (BluesFilm1 1999)

Figure 4.20. Othar Turner – Tight Frame (BluesFilm1 1999)

performance is completed. This is in sharp contrast to the next piece of footage where the videographer has focused in so tight by Othar that almost all else is excluded (see Figure 4.20). This gives the impression of separation of Othar from his community and from the drummers leaving viewers to focus their attention almost completely on Othar.

"Turner Family Picnic" (2009)

"Turner Family Picnic" is a very brief segment of the live performance by Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble on the Othar Turner homestead site. Both image and sound are of higher quality than the previous YouTube video and, as in the previous YouTube video, the producer, GeorgeMosely1, is unidentifiable. This time, however, it can be assumed that the producer is likely an attendee of the event given the position in the circle forming around the performers. The video quality is improved from the previous film.

Figure 4.21. Turner Family Picnic – Sharde and Young Girl (GeorgeMosely1 2009)

Sharde Thomas is a young woman (18 years old) and the Turner Family Picnic has become a spectacle complete with a camera crew (e.g., high end camera, overhead microphone) and both white and black spectators taking photographs and observing the performance. Except for a brief moment where Sharde invites a young, white girl to play with the group (see Figure 4.21), this fragment indicates a move away from its grassroots origins toward a polished, almost 'festivalized' product complete with a flatbed stage and backing musicians in the background.

"North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic 2010"

"North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic 2010" is an independent You Tube video posted by MaxShores. This video contains a performance by Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife and Drum playing "Station Blues" (also known as an old blues song entitled

“Sittin’ On Top Of The World”) at the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic near Waterford, Mississippi. As in the previous two YouTube videos, attempts to contact the producer, MaxShores, to gather information were unsuccessful. The footage is taken from the stage at the picnic. The filming quality and editing are advanced compared to the other YouTube productions. Based on the position of the producer, I suggest that they are either a part of the stage crew, festival organizers, or friends of Sharde Thomas. This professional style product seems to coincide with the expected release of Thomas’s album and her YouTube album introduction discussed below.

The professionalism of this festival is evidenced by the construction of the stage, the tarping, sound system, stage lights, barrier between the audience and the performers as well as the canopy tents on the grounds. Sharde is playing with two snare drummers and a bass drummer. The snare drummer closest to her and the bass drummer are longtime Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble members and her Turner family cousins. She and the other snare drummer don an orange Othar Turner T-shirt (see Figure 4.22). All are dressed for the performance and stand in front of a row of monitors.

The audio track for this film fragment is unedited and the live sound is mixed with reverb (particularly on the fife line). The result is a rich, full, balanced sound of all instruments. There is a change in the tone only once when the camera audio is no longer picking up the stage monitors but the front of house when he pans for a scan of the audience.

Second, viewers see a separation between musicians on stage and the audience when the camera pans right. Within the audience we see a security steel barrier fence

that is meant to secure the safety of the musicians. It is striking that there are a sea of Anglo American audience members and three African Americans in the entire camera pan. It is also noteworthy that these three African Americans are the only people in front of the barrier (see Figure 4.23).

There is clearly a product to sell here. Sharde and the Rising Star Fife & Drum are marketing two things: blues music and the memory of Othar Turner. Compared with other footage, the presentation of a legendary blues song “Station Blues” in North Mississippi is not done in the traditional fife and drum style of the unbroken fife melody against polyrhythmic drums. In this performance, the presentation follows 4/4 time, takes a full four beat rest during the last bar of the twelve bar blues cycle, and most of the song is sung by Sharde. The fife is used as accompaniment rather than as the lead voice in the ensemble.

Figure 4.22. North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic Stage (MaxShores 2010)

Figure 4.23. Security Barrier (MaxShores 2010)

Figure 4.24. Sharde's Studio Recording Display (Davis & Davis 2010)

"Sharde Thomas 'What Do I Do?' Album Introduction" (2010)

"Sharde Thomas 'What Do I Do?' Album Introduction" is an album preview posted on the YouTube channel of album producers, Ricky and Micol Davis of Blue Mother Tupelo late in 2010. This audiovisual representation is independent and captures some of the recording equipment and instrumentation in the Davis's studio (see Figures 4.24 and

Figure 4.25. Studio Drum Kit (Davis & Davis 2010)

Figure 4.26. Turner Family Photo (Davis & Davis 2010)

4.25). It is almost entirely shot from photographic images (see Figure 4.26) and graphically enhanced images except for some live footage of recording the drum track. The audio is one song track from the album. This film sequence continues to intertwine Sharde's family history and her vision for the future.

Commercial Entertainment Industry Representations

"Wayne County Ramblin' " (1996)

“Wayne County Ramblin’ ” was filmed in 1999 (an approximation based on Sharde’s general age in the film) and released in 2006 after the death of Othar Turner. The premise of the film is that three white, urban young adults are travelling through “creole nation” on a quest for themselves. The producer shapes his representation along the lines of the crossroads legend, a mythical blues story where a person seeking solace goes to a crossroad in Mississippi where ‘the devil’, represented as a blind, black man, shows them ‘the way’ in exchange for their soul. In this film, Turner represents ‘the devil’ who meets three, young, white youth at the crossroads and guides them on a journey of self discovery through preparations for and participation in the Rising Star Fife & Drum performance.

The first thing that I notice about these film segments is that there is congruence between image and sound with very little alteration of either. The film activities are made to fit into an overall script, there is certain integrity of experience that is maintained. The main characters interact with Othar Turner, Sharde Thomas, the Turner family, and the “Turner Family Picnic” audience on three occasions. The first time is when an old, frail, seemingly blind African American man (Othar Turner) sings and plays the fife to the standard piece in his repertoire, “Glory, Glory Hallelujah.” The images of Mr. Turner at a crossroads in Gravel Springs and his singing and playing of a hymn are placed in the storyline to signify a calling home of sorts for the young, white questing female.

Second, viewers see the three young, white adult movie actors participating in the preparations in response to instruction from Othar Turner and his adult daughters as well as a scene where a young Sharde Thomas is preparing for and eventually playing a

Figure 4.27. Voodoo or African Spirit Doll Image (Rose 2005)

Figure 4.28. Young Sharde Fife Gesture (Rose 2005)

fishing folk song adding rhythmic texture on a drum kit. The setting is spliced with images of a bored dog and a 'Voodoo' or 'African Spirit Doll' (see Figure 4.27) that may or may not be a stage prop. It seems unlikely given the family's strong adherence to the

Methodist Baptist belief system (Turner 2010) that this object does not belong to the family.

The third film fragment is the fife and drum performance at the "Turner Family Picnic." It begins with Sharde's fife call that seems to set the rhythm for the drums that join in later. The audience is a congregation of black and white people who are generally having a good time, drinking, dancing, visiting, and attending to the fife and drum performance. Of note in this section is the instruction that Othar is providing to Sharde during her performance and her performance gestures seem similar to that of Napoleon Strickland in the earlier discussion (see Figure 4.28). In both of these images we can see the presence of other cameras: the video camera in the first and the photographic camera in the second. The viewer is privy to performance information captured by the main producer's camera as well as other producers using their cameras to represent their experiences – a representation or representations.

"Feel Like Going Home: A Martin Scorsese Production" (2003)

"Feel Like Going Home: A Martin Scorsese Production" is one DVD in a boxed-set of seven. It was directed and published by Martin Scorsese in conjunction with the release of Gangs of New York in 2003 and became a megahit selling millions of copies worldwide. Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum are featured in the film. This time, however, there is no mere suggestion or query of African retentions as Lomax did in early audiovisual representations. There is but one focus here; North Mississippi fife and drum is a direct link to Africa that has been "carefully preserved and passed down " (Scorsese 2003). The presentation occurs in four parts: The first, recognition of Alan

Lomax's prior recording work excluding others researchers (e.g., John Work III, David Evans, George Mitchell). The second, a one-on-one musical sharing between blues and roots independent musician, Corey Harris, and the now legendary Othar Turner. Third, a demonstration of fife and drum by eleven-year old Sharde Thomas, and the Rising Star Fife & Drum. Last, images and music from West Africa.

There are three film fragments containing thought provoking information. The first is that of the location of the interview between Corey Harris and Othar Turner sitting on the front porch of an old building with a United States flag in the window as a curtain. This building is Othar Turner's uninhabitable sharecropper cabin most often seen on film and in photographic images.

The second is that of an eleven-year-old Sharde Thomas and the Rising Star Fife & Drum performing for the camera (see Figure 4.29). This image appears soon after the conversation between Othar Turner and Corey Harris in which it is agreed that Mr. Turner is the last fifer to carry on the tradition. Unlike the rest of the smooth transitions on the video, this image appears after a rough edit that immediately contradicts the conclusion that there is no one to carry the tradition forward. In this film sequence, the viewer sees that Sharde plays both the fife and the snare drum. Her fife riffs are changed from earlier footage (e.g., "Othar Turner and Sharde Thomas: 'Remembering Othar Turner'" 2008).

The final image is one that follows the narrative text. The narrator states that music in

Figure 4.29. Young Sharde Drumming (Scorsese 2003)

Figure 4.30. West African Fifers (Scorsese 2003)

West Africa was being:

> recorded in the Mississippi. When you listen to the fife and drum, the presence of forties about the same time that Alan Lomax was recording in Africa is unmistakable. Something was passed along in this music. These rhythms were carefully passed down generation after generation, through slavery, through Jim Crow, right up to the present. It was an act of survival. (Scorsese 2003)

As the narration occurs, photographs of male drummers and fifers emerge on the screen. In particular, the African fifers appear to be dressed in ceremonial clothing playing homemade fifes (see Figure 4.30) and are visually contrasted with Sharde playing a homemade fife.

"Gangs of New York" (2002)

"Gangs of New York" is a feature film written by Jay Cocks, Steven Zaillian, and Kenneth Lonergan, directed by Martin Scorsese, and distributed by Miramax Films late in 2002. The film is an historical drama set in New York's Five Points District depicting the territorial battles among Irish Catholic immigrants and the American born immigrants. The movie begins with an opening battle set in the year 1846 and ends when Federal soldiers intervene in the New York Draft Riots of 1863.

There are two scene sequences in the movie where Othar Turner's audio recording of "Shimmy She Wobble" appears. I have selected the first sequence, the opening scene of the movie, for interpretation. In the scene, Amsterdam Vallon (DiCaprio's character as a young boy) and his father, Priest Vallon (Liam Neeson), lead an Irish Catholic procession through underground tunnels as a group move toward a battle with the "American Natives." I note two obvious audio edits of "Shimmy She Wobble" when comparing the soundtrack to the original. In addition to variations in volume, the extraneous sounds

Figure 4.31. Painted Face (Cocks, Zaillian, and Lonergan 2003)

Figure 4.32. The Cross and The Drum (Cocks, Zaillian, and Lonergan 2003)

Figure 4.33. Goat, Rooster, Dancer (Cocks, Zaillian, and Lonergan 2003)

of the live recording are removed (*e.g.*, crackling of the fire and talking of audience members) and the song begins at the thirty-one second mark, not at the beginning of the track (Turner 2001).

Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble do not appear in the film. This decision is a departure for Scorsese who is known for presenting the musicians playing music for his film soundtrack. The historical narrative of African Americans as 'heard but not seen' in depictions of the American Civil War is reinforced. Instead, Turner's music is implicated in images that reinforce ideas of its African origins.

In the first image sequence (set in 1846), white Irish males are involved in a procession to the battlefield. During the procession they pass by black males painted in what viewers may consider as "tribal" or "savage" face and body paint (see Figure 4.31), as drummers on the djembe (see Figure 4.32) and dunun drums, and as dancers. Later in

the sequence there are images of a black man sitting on the floor dressed in dirty, ragged clothes with what seems like a weary, forlorn look on his face. There is one black woman carrying a large and seemingly calm and then agitated rooster and a goat in the background beside burning candles appearing to suggest that she is a "witch doctor" or that there is African magic afoot (see Figure 4.33). Irish Americans are represented as organized pillars of strength and courage with the power of their Catholic God in hand (e.g., the celtic cross staff held by Neeson) while African Americans are represented as disorganized, 'primitive', animistic people in need of salvation.

Discussion

Intragroup Comparisons

Academic Representations of North Mississippi fife and drum music take two approaches to framing the video or film information. The first, "Gravel Springs Fife and Drum," presents an observational documentary-style approach with a clear, organized storyline. This approach keeps a distance between the subject and the producer with a broader camera frame but also invites the viewer into the life of the subject. This approach is strengthened by the inclusion of Mr. Turner's narrative voice overdub. Even though Ferris shapes Turner's narrative and footage along a storyline and Peiser edits accordingly, the viewer seems to have greater freedom to form their own conclusions. But this approach is works with the subtle illusion that Turner is directly telling the story to the viewer when, in reality, his story is being shaped by the producer and editor who are all invisible to the viewer.

By comparison, Lomax's films, "The Land Where the Blues Began" and "Newport Folk Festival" ("Delta Blues/Cajun Two-Step") share the observational documentary-style approach but overlay it with his outright vococentric, authoritative narration as the producer. The result is that Lomax is guiding the viewer to understand the subjects as he interprets them to be. While that is a subjective position, it is also a forthright one. This subjective position seems to obscure the ways he uses his position to reflect the views of the dominant, white, male culture at that point in history.

This dominance is reflected in the 'voice-of-God' experience when the listener is distracted by a clear, authoritative, educated, Anglo American voice that seems to tower over the images of African Americans living in a state of poverty, dancing and playing music in the dust and dirt. Although this experience is due to the body's perceptive qualities, there is a sense that the position of the voice is at a higher status than the subjects. In addition, Lomax's comparison of African American fife and drum musicians "looking like the 'Spirit of '76 " (Lomax 1978) elevates the Anglo American fife and drum as the style to be copied. In actuality, there are very few common features. However, the excitement in his voice sounds genuine and he does seem to champion African American fife and drum music but may not be fully aware of the effects of his position of power over the subjects and fieldwork materials.

It would be easy to dismiss the material for its subjectivity except that, in the process, despite the producer's frame, the video material contains material that reinforces and challenges dominant views of North Mississippi fife and drum music still held today. The dominant view, promoted by Lomax's narrative, is that this music is inspired by blues

music, is performed by black, male musicians imitating the heroic white soldiers of the American Revolutionary War, is performed mostly in isolated settings where only men gather to listen and dance, and is evidence of direct link to Africa. However, these stereotypical representations are not unique to Lomax's production by this point in history. By 1978 there were layers of audio, video, and film interpretations by Ferris, Evans, Peiser, and Mitchell.

Some unique features of his audiovisual material that unintentionally interrupt the focus of Lomax's narrative include: (1) Footage of young girls drumming in a playful manner (e.g., one facing forward and the other walking backward), female drumming in the fife and drum ensemble, and two varied performance spaces – one, in an isolated space where the ensemble is lined up behind each other and, the other, a space where there is little distance between audience participant and musician; (2) Dancing and performance gestures, and (3) Female drum musicians.

Educational Representations have common and varied positions. "Music in Colonial Williamsburg 1960" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" are created within twenty years of each other even though "Music in Colonial Williamsburg 1960" is intended to represent the American Civil War period. However, the Williamsburg film really takes place during the American Civil Rights era when black and white racial tensions were high. Despite the producer's prior attempts to challenge racial and class divisions, the film ends up reinforcing stereotypes. He separates black and white music making in a carefully crafted script where he juxtaposes white military soldiers with black slaves. The soldiers are presented in a powerful, organized, and dignified manner while supposed

African American slaves are free to make music, laugh, and dance in a sexualized manner. I suggest that this seems related to the broader discourse regarding exploitation colonialism.

Lomax, the music producer for the 'slave scenes', supposedly recreates African American music practices that include: males only making music; the fife in an ensemble with African-style drums, banjo, and bones; and, sexualized, opposite sex dancing. In addition, all musicians but one used in the film sequence are not from Viriginia but, rather, were hired by Lomax to perform the scenes (Oja 2003, 3).

Twenty years later, Fred Rogers hosts Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum ensemble. This is a staged performance for a mainstream public television audience but quickly moves into an educational discussion. As host, Mr. Rogers asks questions in order to elicit information directly from the performers. Other than creating an artificial set, the relationships appear to be respectful and collaborative toward a common goal of educating about North Mississippi fife and drum music. As indicated in Chapter Two, throughout Rogers career, he recognized his power as a television personality and the power of television to influence society. He intentionally used his position as host and producer to change society for the benefit of all human beings not just children. Roger's personal politics and capacity as a producer were used toward that end in this representation of Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band demonstrating a link between the person and their representations.

Independent Artistic Representations are the most recent and least edited of all video and film representations. The sound and image quality varies but steadily im-

proves from between 1999 and 2010 during the age of personal 'home' videos. Part of the concern with the home video quality of YouTube film footage is that it may not be archived. These representations can be removed by the account holder at any time and are lost to public viewing. Another issue is that as technology advances, personal videos are of higher quality making the earlier lesser quality ones obsolete and, again, this information may not be archived and part of the historical record.

The physical settings of independent personal video footage vary from a formal music festival performance through to the private, isolated performances in the recording studio. The producer's focus of attention is harder to pinpoint and the lack of available identifying information makes determining their motivations much more difficult.

Commercial Entertainment Industry Representations "Wayne Country Ramblin'," is a 'docu-drama' style film. The producer's approach intentionally blurs the line between myth and reality. The use of the voodoo prop and the bizarre 'honey transformation' sequence reinforces existing stereotypes about African American fife and drum music. Even more, the use of the idol would be disrespectful to the Turner family who uphold a set strong of Christian values. His desire for a profitable artistic product may have overridden ethical representation.

Despite the producer's fictional representations, he manages to capture the participatory duties involved in setting up for the fife and drum performance. The footage includes Othar's daughter and legendary Rising Star Fife & Drum member, Bernice Pratcher, directing the actors. There is also a point where the producer's frame captures "The Committee" of Turner family women (briefly mentioned in Chapter One) serving

food and beverages under the lean-to on Othar's home site. Finally, Sharde is presented as drummer, singer, dancer, and fifer. This is the broadest view of her musical abilities in all film and video representations.

Comparatively, Martin Scorsese builds the "Gangs of New York" footage and the "Feels Like Going Home: A Martin Scorsese Production" footage on Lomax's folklore legacy. In both films, he strongly reinforces the ideas of direct links to Africa through film and photographic images as well as narration. He also reinforces ideas of whites going off to battle in "Gangs of New York" while blacks dance, drum, and, possibly, perform traditional African religious rituals. Scorsese uses this approach as a way of tapping into the profitable 'authentic' black music market.

There are three other ideas that emerge when contrasting Scorsese's interpretations. The first is that "Feels Like Going Home: A Martin Scorsese Production" shows only African Americans in the fife and drum sequences. The second, the juxtaposition of the large, illuminated Celtic Cross held by Liam Neeson and the goat (presumably belonging to African American slaves in New York) in candlelight. The third is that Scorsese varies from his usual approach to filmmaking when he opts to exclue Othar Turner and the Rising Star Fife & Drum band. Turner sold the performance rights to Martin Scorese and Miramax for eighty thousand dollars (Fuhrman 2010) and "was considered for a part in the movie but that never happened" (Turner 2010). Instead Scorsese chose an edited musical selection and represented the music by implicating it in a battle scene of which African Americans have no part.

Scorsese is not shy to use artistic license to manipulate historical facts in a highly dramatic fashion resulting extremely profitable Hollywood blockbusters. He has developed a very successful and profitable career using a distinct stylistic approach that appeases music and film industry executives and as well as consumers.

Intergroup Comparisons

When comparing the groups with each other, one can begin to see that the producer's representations of African American fife and drum music is quite varied depending on their environment, aim, aspirations, ideologies, and social positions. Academic representations work to place the musical tradition within its context of daily life including work, kinship, and community. The producer's stylistic approach may manipulate the ethnographic footage with seeming invisibility in the case of "Gravel Springs Fife and Drum" or obviously declare their subjective experience through narration as Lomax did in "The Land Where the Blues Began." In the educational group, the musicians provide minimal information about their lives and are completely outside of their environment. They are represented as either speaking about or demonstrating their musical practices. The independent artistic group is focused completely on the performance of music whether at the Turner Family Picnic site, at a music festival, or in the recording studio. Most distant from real life is the commercial entertainment industry. Creative licence is generously used and it seems to lack integrity due to lack of historical accuracy. The only exception are parts of "Wayne Country Ramblin' " that convey real life preparations and performances at the "Turner Family Picnic."

There are layers upon layers of representations in each group. The most obvious contained within our samples are the ideologies of Alan Lomax. He has directly acted on film and video in three of the samples, “The Land Where the Blues Began,” “Newport Folk Festival” (“Delta Blues/Cajun Two-Step), and “Music of Colonial Williamsburg 1960.” Twenty-five years later, Martin Scorsese uses Lomax’s ideas about North Mississippi fife and drum music as foundational pieces for his own series of representations. This is likely one of the clearest demonstrations that as layers are added to original representations, they become increasingly influential and may in fact be related to the considerable power that Scorsese and Lomax, to a lesser degree, generated over the course of their careers.

CHAPTER FIVE

Interpretive Discussion

The research aim of this thesis was to examine, interpret, and compare varied audio, video, and film representations of African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi. By engaging with the material, I discovered the myriad ways that the representations of this musical tradition are constructed by the ideologies of the producer. Over time, layers of interpretations and representations by producers and consumers have highlighted underlying tensions about its musical origins, music makers, performance styles, and economic realities. In order to understand the producer's frame on audio recordings, film, and video, it was important to understand what may have prompted that person to encounter North Mississippi fife and drum music, motivations for their project, and the chosen mode and primary control of the representation.

The first attempt to represent African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi was the field recording in 1942 by Alan Lomax and John Work III. The importance of Lomax's initial and subsequent representations are very significant as he represented an institution, used his position to take control of the project, copyright the material, and continually built upon his own initial representations in subsequent years.

Until the mid-1960s, Lomax was free to interpret the materials he was gathering without accountability. He consistently cloaked African American fife and drum music as the manifestation of African rhythms and cultural practices; at once fascinating and frightening at the same time. Lomax used an expository mode (his voice) in framing the materials he interpreted. His use of narrative text is instruction to the viewer about what

they should be thinking and seeing in the presentation of images that support his ideas. His white, male, authoritarian, voice raises ethical issues “of how the text speaks objectively or persuasively (or as an instrument of propaganda)” (Nichols 1991).

Lomax continued to claim that African American fife and drum music served as proof of a direct link to Africa. This idea is interwoven in the fabric of all academic and commercial industry representations examined in this thesis. There are those like ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik who maintain the viability of African retentions (Kubik 1999) but, for the most part, Africanness is more of an approach than concrete music materials.

> This underlines the importance of not blindly attributing everything found both in Africa and in the Americas to an African root; both in Africa and the New World, these bands appear to have derived from the European and Revolutionary War fife-and-drum bands. They are in fact not direct African survivals but further examples of a re-Africanization of European material through inherited and African-derived attitudes to music. (Roberts 1998, 55)

The network of professional researchers – folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and journalists – focusing on the musical traditions in North Mississippi was relatively insular. As a pioneer, Lomax’s interpretations influenced the representations of other producers and, until recently, his reputation seemed beyond reproach. This exemplifies the capacity of his original interpretations to shaping attitudes - for better or for worse - towards African American music and how through the process of layering one representation on another, ideologies become very powerful and difficult to dispel.

The interpretive analysis processes used in this thesis make it possible to understand the tremendous impact of the representer (carrying all her or his ‘baggage’) on represen-

tation thereby illuminating otherwise hidden structures of cultural power. There is a perpetuation of stereotypes about 'authentic', black cultural products.

> A complex and often contested terrain of discourse, representation, and politics typifies these conditions of black cultural production. These cultural struggles bear directly on questions of power; in particular, the relationship of dominant national institutions to forms of black culture that remain outside of mainstream institutions. (Gray 2005, 13)

But these structures extend beyond the color line into ideas about gender, education, socio-economic status, and religion.

Certainly one of the most significant developments over the past decade has been the media representation of a new, female leader of the African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi. With the support and encouragement of her family and community, twenty-year old Sharde Thomas is the first female leader of this musical tradition. She has produced her own audio and video representations. Her album, "What Do I Do?," is legally copyright protected, distributed independently, consists of unique musical ideas on blending the fife and drum sound with contemporary musical influences. Sharde promotes her album using social networking sites and her music performances have been the focus of independent video producers. She represents herself, her family, and her artistry.

The Turner family is right to be angry about the cultural appropriation of their heritage by academic and commercial industry representatives but they also realize that without a marketplace for an 'authentic', black musical product, their tradition may not have survived (Turner 2010). It is a double bind to resist and to benefit from interactions with primarily white, male, producers and consumers. Out of necessity or out of choice, Afri-

can American fife and drum musicians, whether they fully realize it or not, are complicit in the representational process by selling their products (e.g., tickets to live performances, music merchandise) in the music market. Has intermittent financial success (e.g., "Gangs of New York" money) shaped the musical output? Has it shaped the artistic approach to recording or performing? These are questions for future research initiatives.

Early in this thesis I discussed the realization that there is a team of producers on any given project and that I made a choice to focus on the producer who is credited with legal copyright over the material. There is striking complexity of exactly who the producer is and what competing interests win out in the production of the final product. To lay all the power at the feet of the producer of the final product or the musical tradition would be to greatly oversimplify matters of structure versus agency. They are all a part of the same market and in the end, the network produces the representation.

The producer's frame was initially successful in focusing my attention. However, through the analytical processes, it became evident that there were other areas of interest that could form the basis of future research. These include: the impact of technology on representation; the contributions of female musicians; African American oral transmission of musical processes; African American dance in North Mississippi; and, meaning and ritual at the "Turner Family Picnic."

Concluding Comments

Audio, film, and video representations about African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi are political. For over seventy years this musical tradition has been subjected to, resisted, and embraced political representations about race, power, socio

economic status, religion, and gender. I have not lost sight of the fact that I am 'representing the representations' and, in doing so, I embed my own ideologies including my position as an educated, white, feminized Canadian female representing an educational institution. I believe that in this media-saturated age it is important to maintain critical engagement with the reach and power of technology in order to continue learning "how individuals assemble their perceptions of places and of the people who inhabit them" (Barker and McKee 2011, 19) and I consider it equally important to complete this activity ethically.

Throughout the writing of this thesis I struggled with defining my position because, as with many ethnomusicologists, I have multiple perspectives as a musician, scholar, and producer of African American fife and drum music in North Mississippi. It is easier to criticize than to be original. After grappling with how to group the representational materials, I settled on groups that were as limited as the others I tried. Placing the mechanics of organization aside, it was of utmost important to me that the Turner family was presented as part of the representational process and that their power be recognized and documented. Equally important was the interrogation of ethnomusicology holding our discipline to account for its value and its harm in the study of the North Mississippi fife and drum community.

I will return to North Mississippi in April 2012 to meet with the Bobbi Turner, Sharde Thomas, and Dick Fuhrman with the hope that by sharing the research materials generated as part of this project, new bridges can be built. In the end, this comparative analysis of audio, video, and film representations has strong elements of meta-

ethnomusicology at its roots and perhaps, a new ethnography beyond the participant-observation approach.

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