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The Joy of Arts Integration

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Born Aug. 12, 1939 into the beginning of World War II, I have been pursuing peace and the joy of arts integration through rhythm, grooving on and in reality, from my earliest years. I believe that this is what all children are born wanting to do -- to participate, to be part of a group moving in synchrony and in flow, feeling the pleasures of teamplay, enjoying life. But then we adults (through our technomedia and schools) 'talk them out of it,' sometimes before they experience groove-focus-flow sufficiently as children. We ask them to accept perpetual training: for specialization, for small parts in the division of labor, for alienation from their full participation and potential.

From my first publication "Motion and Feeling Thru Music" (1966), to the most recent, Born to Groove (2011), I have been seeking to understand music-dance-drama-performance phenomena holistically: as part of a pattern/process; as a "way" or "path" or "tao" of culture; as "integrated-arts" and "rites of passage;" as community "dromena" (rites pre-done, done, re-done) and "ngoma" (drumming-singing-dancing-dramatizing for healing purposes). This continual seeking or quest can be phrased as two questions:

- 1) how do music-dance-drama processes (e.g. noh and kabuki), processions & parades (e.g. chindonya), ceremonies and celebrations (e.g. shinto), hold a pattern of culture together?
- 2) how best can we acculturate and socialize very young children into the joys of skilled performances in each town, neighborhood, community-locality?

Both of these questions are addressed in the two other lectures I have brought with me: "Localized Music-Dance-Dramas and the Great Transition" and "Philosophical Foundations of Groovology and Echology as Joyous Sciences"

Urban Blues (1966)¹ represents research done very quickly -- a single short interview with B.B. King, a few hours spent attending Bobby Blue Bland performances, recording an hour-long radio program in which African-Americans phoned in to discuss "soul" music with a disc jockey, some observations at a recording studio -- were the basis for four chapters establishing African-Americans as having a culture of their own. The popular success of this book gave me tenure at a university, without a Ph.D. And it also gave me confidence in the ethnographic

research process of participant-observation and asking simple questions that would elicit "native categories," as well as insider insights, into what people were doing and why they were doing it. Appendix B of *Urban Blues "Talking About Music"* is still the best synthesis or transdisciplinary model I have been able to offer for what "a more comprehensive study of the blues or any other musical style might be like"². I have started to collect the interviews for *Blues Grooves* with the simple question "How many blues grooves can you name and describe?" and the answers have to do with localities, personalities, tempos, repeated rhythmic patterns that connect and integrate "stance", "story telling", "song", "preaching" to make listeners and witnesses feel "mellow". This mellowness or soulfulness is some variety of quiet joy coming from "Lucille", B.B. King's guitar, that he also thinks of as a koto. (August 28, 1963, p. 111 in *Urban Blues*).

Tiv Song (1979) tells the story of slow research done over 3 years, written up with much anguish over a decade. I still have not found a way to write effectively about the crushing of Biafra (1966-70). Singing, dancing, and tale-telling energies in Tivland I interpreted as a matter of life against death, pleasure & good against power-over and evil. As Kuji Iyum, a Tiv composer, put it: ". . . even the white man, who has more money and is above all of us in the world, he does sing just like other people. When you tune the radio, one of the first things you will hear will be his songs. He has everything, all the knowledge, but still he sings his songs. So we should ask, 'what has befallen him?'" Tiv make a "blues assumption" -- that all songs have their origin in pain, disease, poverty, loss, suffering, inequality. It is thru drumming, singing, musicking, dancing, in concentric circles of primary communication that we experience joy in triumphing over adversities.

Polka Happiness (1992) sings the praises of Polish-American working class communities that created a style of dance-music full of humor, self-mockery and technical mastery. Over 15 years of research (1970 to 1985) we (Dick Blau and Angie Keil) discovered the power of "secular ritual" to satisfy a "will to party" (*Polka Theory: Perspectives on the Will to Party* 2012) and developed a theory of "participatory consciousness" & "participatory discrepancies" that confirmed parallel developments in African-American music. This independent confirmation led to *Groovology* as a joyous science of micro-timings applicable to musicking, dancing, dramatizing, comedy, diverse sports and games. How is it that every great polka drummer, like every great jazz drummer, has a distinctive "tap" or "touch" on the cymbal or snare drum? Why is it that the "brightness" of two trumpets can lift the rhythm section and get people up and dancing? What force unites bawdy banter, musicking, dancing, food & drink, to create polka happiness or joy? A will to party?

My Music (1993) began a process of understanding the consumption of music in daily life, based upon over 200 interviews. "What is music about for you?" was the basic question. The main discovery for me was idioculture; the capacity of each person to build their own musical world from diverse, if mostly commodified, musical resources. Has the pleasure of listening replaced the joy of participating for most people in the overdeveloped world?

Music Grooves (1994) marked the maturation of many dialogues with Steven Feld over a 25 year period. Counterpointing and discussing our articles gave me assurance that "participatory consciousness" is rational, necessary, a way of reclaiming our "Echological" connections to each other as humans and to Nature in all its diversity of lifeforms and (recorded/"sampled"/"remixed") soundscapes. Steve and I still debate the impact of technologies. Japanese data and Japanese colleagues are an increasingly important part of any such debate. Can the latest technologies be used to constantly reinvent and relocalize old traditions?

Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia (2002) improved upon the teamwork of Polka Happiness and shifted our strategy from ethnographic to a layered documentary³ of layered identities (Turkish/Bulgarian/Greek/Romani), demonstrating how it is that societies traditionally in conflict and separated by languages can be reconciled joyfully in instrumental music-dance ceremonies, processions and celebrations.

Born to Groove (2011) steps outside of ethnography and documentary into prophecy/vision and "applied sociomusicology." I envision a decentralized, democratized, world (post peak-oil & peak-everything) in which Reskilling for Resilience is key to the Great Transition and the slow but broad rediversification of both species and cultures. What have we learned from all our ethnomusicological studies that can help us reclaim and restore the "will to party" in every "small is beautiful" locality? How can we help newborns, infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers to become as fully expressed as possible using the skills of primary communication -- mime, gestures, dancing, drumming, synchronizing, singing, dramatizing?

I believe that the decline and devolution of musicking-dancing abilities can be stopped. We can revive styles, traditions, skills and reverse the devo trends if we transition to sustainable local communities and pay very close attention to satisfying the curiosities and desires for performance in and of our children.

"For who will teach rhythm to the world of machines and guns?" Leopold Senghor

Our children will. If we will let them.

1 An early Japanese translation has been reissued by Blues Interactions Inc. (2000) as part of "Black Culture Archives 03", Supervision: Junko Kitagawa, Translation: Kunihiko Hama + Hiroshi Takahashi.

2 See Matt Sakakeeney's reappraisal "Disciplinary Movements, the Civil Rights Movement, and Charles Keil's Urban Blues" in CURRENT MUSICOLOGY, Nos. 79 and 80 (2005).

3 Layers of histories (A. Keil), cultures (C. Keil), oral histories, visual perspectives (R. Blau's photos and those from inside Jumaya), soundscapes (S. Feld) reveal different aspects of "layered identity".

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