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# Local Bimusicality Among London's Freelance Musicians

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## Introduction

In his famous article titled "The Challenge of Bi-Musicality,"<sup>1</sup> Mantle Hood set out the case for a performance-based engagement with other music cultures. Suggesting that the basic study and training which develops musicality could not be achieved through the more theoretical perspectives offered by musical analysis or criticism, he declared that "the training of ears, eyes, hands and voice and fluency gained in these skills assure a real comprehension of theoretical studies" (Hood 1960:55). Hood's perspective was reflective of the more participatory approach towards understanding the "insider's" view, which both ethnomusicology and its cognate discipline anthropology were developing at that time.

This emphasis on a practical, "hands-on" immersion in other music cultures has profoundly influenced a number of ethnomusicological studies, some of which will surface below. Yet, as I shall argue later, it would be wrong to construe bimusicality as being only the preserve of ethnomusicologists: the ability to move between different performance traditions has long been a necessary skill required of musical specialists, particularly those working in urban contexts, in a variety of traditions around the globe.

In this article I explore the multifaceted relationship between the ethnomusicological concept of bimusicality and the practical experience of musicians working in urban contexts, particularly those working in and among the various traditions frequently, if problematically, construed as "Western." Delimiting such musicians concisely is difficult since the differentiated urban environments in which they work, and the wide range of styles with which they have the opportunity to engage, inevitably give rise to a heterogeneous rather than homogenous group. My focus here is on those who I would describe as classically trained, freelance, professional musicians, notwithstanding

that each one of those words brings with it a plethora of conceptual difficulties. The fieldwork on which the article is based took place in London in the late 1990s, with subsequent interviews conducted on an ad hoc basis over the following years. But I have also drawn on my own experience of freelance work among these same musicians, and have thus attempted—like every ethnographer—to strike an adequate balance between my views and theirs.<sup>2</sup>

I start by reviewing some of the literature on bimusicality, before considering what insights this work on musicians in other cultures provides when turning our attention to “Western” music cultures and, indeed, how the latter might cause us to reconsider the former. Finally I shall argue that the movement of musicians among various Euro-American musical styles can be seen as a form of local bimusicality, and that this both informs and is a component of their individual identity and self-conception. Expanding the concept of bimusicality in this way has implications for ethnomusicology in the 21st century, inasmuch as it begins to suggest a conceptual framework by which the discipline may come to terms with the frequently hybridized forms of music making which are becoming increasingly evident, particularly in urban areas, as a result of globalization.

### **Ethnomusicology and Bimusicality**

It might reasonably be argued that the concept underlying Hood’s notion of bimusicality has a more distinguished historical legacy than the term itself, stretching back, perhaps a little surprisingly, as far as the first comparative musicologists. Abraham and Hornbostel’s *Proposals for the Transcription of Exotic Melodies* from 1909 suggests that if a phonograph is unavailable as a transcription aid, then it is best “if the researcher himself learns the songs or instrumental pieces to the contentment of the natives. Critics must be musically gifted according to the judgement of their compatriots; make sure approval is not only politeness or disinterest. One will most certainly be able to judge what the natives consider essential to their music—their point of view often deviates considerably from the European one.” They also observe that such an approach demands “great patience by teacher and student, unusual musical talent, good melodic memory, much time and also much money” (1909:15–16). This remarkably prescient view demonstrates an understanding of the value of learning to perform the music of other cultures which arguably goes beyond that outlined by Hood; not only must the details of the music itself be internalized and the necessary performance skills be acquired in order to reconstitute it satisfactorily, but the social contact that arises from the learning process is also seen to yield valuable insights into issues such as local notions of musicality, talent, student-teacher relationships,

and so forth. While these benefits would undoubtedly have been seen at the time as peripheral to the main objective—the production of suitable transcriptions—hindsight perhaps allows us to ascribe rather more significance to these passing observations.

There were of course other examples of the practice of bimusicality long before Hood's original article: John Baily draws attention to A.M. Jones's work in the 1930s, and the latter's assertion that to understand properly African rhythm one must "join an African band and learn to take one's part" (2001:87). Both Bruno Nettl (1964:22) and Jeff Todd Titon (1995:297n2) have pointed out that David McAllester was using bimusicality in his fieldwork with the Navaho in the 1940s, although McAllester himself (1979:185) credits Hood with coining the term. Perhaps the keenest early advocate of a performance-based ethnomusicology was John Blacking, who in several publications extols the virtues and benefits to be gained from such methodology. To give one of many possible examples, Blacking writes of his fieldwork with the Venda in the 1950s that he learnt songs from both adults and children, and that "my teachers were patient and insisted on correcting my mistakes, so that I began to learn what was expected of a singer and what tolerances were allowed" (1967:33). Thus, while such methods could by no means be considered a defining characteristic of pre-1960s ethnomusicology, there are sufficient examples in the literature to suggest some historical depth to the concept of bimusicality, or of practices that might reasonably be construed as related to it.

Later scholars have modified or critiqued Hood's original concept. John Baily has queried the accuracy of the term, pointing out that Hood presumably adapted both the notion and terminology of being "bilingual" for his own musical purposes. But Baily argues that there are problems implied by this terminology. Being bilingual is usually taken to mean being equally fluent in two languages, perhaps having learned them together during childhood. Mastering a second language later in life, however competently and fluently, is never quite the same thing. Yet Hood certainly intended that his term "bi-musicality" should include those acquiring skills in later years, since he used some of his graduate students in California as examples. Furthermore, Baily queries just how different these traditions have to be before travelling the distance between them can be construed as bimusicality. He asks, "What about the person who combines competence in European art music and rock music? Baroque music and Minimalism? North and South Indian art musics?" (Baily 2001:86). These are very salient questions in the present context and they will be revisited below. Baily prefers to recast bimusicality as "learning to perform," thus emphasizing both its place as a research tool and its pedagogic and autodidactic nature.<sup>3</sup> He also articulates more explicitly (ibid.:93–96) some of the values of this research method which Hornbostel

and Abrahams had—unwittingly—previously touched upon: the acquisition of performance skills by the researcher, the study of learning systems, local concepts of musicality, the provision of a status, and role for the researcher.

Baily's interest in the linguistic roots of the term bimusicality also resonates with Mark Slobin's views on code switching and code superimposition as modes of musical analysis and performance. Slobin's terminology is borrowed from sociolinguistics. Following Labov (1972) Slobin defines code switching as "moving from one consistent set of co-occurring rules to another" (1979:2), while code superimposition is "a process whereby codes are layered at one and the same moment of performance" (*ibid.*:5). Slobin extends this analogy by arguing that musical styles can be seen as equivalent to language codes. Performers who are familiar with and competent in more than one musical style may switch between them within a single performance for a variety of reasons: perhaps to satisfy the competing demands of an ethnically diverse audience, each of whom wishes to hear music they take to be representative of their own musical culture; perhaps for the purposes of confrontation, parody or humour, in which the injection of different stylistic codes into the same piece can reveal underlying assumptions about identity, power, ethnicity, etc.; or as evidence of acculturation, in which the results of musical change brought about by contact between cultures is manifested through the adaptation or infiltration of musical codes not "indigenous" to the primary music culture. Such acculturative influences may provide evidence of past or present social or cultural shifts.

Although the term bimusicality does not appear in Slobin's article, there is an obvious analogy between his notion of individual performers moving between different musical style codes and Hood's ideas on acquiring performance skills in different music cultures. In truth, Slobin's perspective is predicated upon the idea that a given performer might switch between codes in the course of a single performance (by performing pieces from noticeably different repertoires, for example), whereas Hood's notion of bimusicality was clearly based on a vision of a longer term immersion in a different music culture, something which would remain quite separate from one's primary music culture. But they appear to share common ground in their belief that performing musicians can "carry more than one set of rules simultaneously" (Slobin 1979:2), and that there is much to be learned from considering what the differences between such sets of rules might be and why musicians might choose to change between them. Slobin also points out that there are a number of parameters relating to musical performance that could be described as "non-musical," which might equally be considered codes, and thus may also need to be switched between during any given performance. Such parameters may include "rules of behavior, dress, performer-listener relationship, a whole range of aspects relating to physical setting, and so

on" (1979:3). Thus competence in musical performance extends beyond simply producing appropriate musical patterns at particular moments—it also requires performers to understand a range of conventions and behavior patterns in order to be taken as accomplished participants in the performance event. From this perspective bimusicality or code switching demands social as well as musical expertise, again resonating with Baily's assertions on the social dimensions of "learning to perform."

A different perspective on bimusicality is offered by Jeff Todd Titon. For Titon bimusicality is also a learning strategy, but one which thrusts the results of our learning upon us not because we "'notice' such results as observers, but because we live them, we 'experience' them in our performance of another music" (1995:289). But Titon takes bimusicality further than this, arguing that the concept can be used metaphorically to denote what he describes as a subject shift, "where one acquires knowledge by figuratively stepping outside oneself to view the world with oneself in it, thereby becoming both subject and object simultaneously" (1995:288). We empathize with the position of those whom we study because bimusicality enables us to experience what they experience. It offers a musical way of being-in-the-world or, I might suggest, being-in-*their*-world, and the subject shift it sometimes engenders allows us metaphorically to step out of that experience and view ourselves within it. It is during these moments that, Titon observes, "we are wrenched out of our ordinary identity and learn something about our 'informants' and ourselves" (1995:290). And, as with Baily, Titon asserts that bimusicality can operate as a learning strategy, one that "not only leads to musical skills but to understanding people making music" (1995:289). But of more significance in the present context is Titon's connection with self-conception and identity construction. Bimusicality teaches us something about ourselves, about the preconceptions and expectations—both social and musical—that we bring to the study of another music culture, and that we quite probably need to unlearn, or at the very least modify, in order to participate competently in music cultures beyond our own. It also allows us in part to experience how others understand their own musical identities, to understand, as Titon puts it, "musicking in the world" (1995:296).

While these and other ethnomusicologists have generally seen the bimusical researcher in a positive light, there have been some critiques of this form of "truly participatory participant observation" (Shelemay 1997:191). The so-called Hood-Merriam polemic of the early 1960s arose in part from concerns about the usefulness of bimusicality; it was argued that it tended to focus attention on the details of musical structures themselves rather than the cultural contexts in which such structures evolved.<sup>4</sup> As Gage Averill observes, it was subsequently felt by some that, as ethnomusicology departments attempted to develop students' skills in bimusicality, they emphasized ensemble

music-making of particular complexity—Javanese gamelan, Japanese *gagaku*, Ewe and Ashanti drumming, for example—thus shifting attention away from types of music making which might be characterized as “folk” or “primitive,” or which were underpinned by less explicit types of music theory; this then tended to reproduce or reinscribe “a Euro-American fetish for sophistication even while purporting to stand for its negation” (2004:97). Koning (1980) has also argued that performing fieldworkers have not always taken care over the degree to which they—perhaps unwittingly—influence the socio-musical contexts within which they work. Yet this has not prevented bimusicality from becoming a significant component of a number of musical ethnographies, in contexts as diverse as Bulgaria (Rice 1994), Papua New Guinea (Feld 1982), and Brazil (Seeger 1987), to cite only a few examples.

What emerges from this brief review of various scholarly positions is that the concept of bimusicality in fact covers a broader range of issues than the “training of ears, eyes, hands and voice” upon which it was initially predicated by Hood. In particular, there are three areas which are especially significant in the light of what follows: (1) that the concept of bimusicality is problematized to a degree by the issue of how far one needs to travel, as it were, from one performance tradition to the next, in order for competence in both of them to be construed as bimusicality; (2) that these different traditions can be identified by the different codes which characterize them, and these codes relate not only to musical conventions but to issues such as modes of dress and other patterns of behavior relating to performance practice (familiarity with and movement between these codes might be seen as analogous to linguistic code switching); and, (3) that the concept of bimusicality can be used metaphorically as a way of seeing ourselves, something which helps us to consider our own identity as well as that of others. In the rest of this article I hope to show how some of these ideas might be applied to Western musicians working in urban contexts, and what this might reveal to us about their conception of who they are and what they do.

### **Bimusicality and Freelance Musicians in the West**

Much of the work cited above, and particularly that which focuses on bimusicality as a research tool for ethnomusicologists, understandably views it as something acquired by “us” in our efforts to study “others.” Less commonly, some studies point out that bimusicality is not only a characteristic or skill that may be acquired by ethnomusicologists, but that it is also for many music-makers around the world a *sine qua non* of their work. For example, Martha Ellen Davis (1994) has written of the increasingly prevalent instances of individual bimusicality in various contexts in the Caribbean, as the syncretic results of competing African and European traditions become



increasingly creolized. Manuel Pena (1985) has demonstrated the necessity in the 1950s and '60s for Mexican *orquesta* players to switch between "modern" American and "traditional" Latin/Mexican styles, an expansion of music skills which was similarly predicated upon the increasing biculturalism and urbanization of middle class Texas-Mexicans. Away from the Americas, R. Anderson Sutton has shown how the plurality of musical traditions on Java has led to performers necessarily developing competence in a variety of discrete styles, particularly among those professionals employed at the local radio stations (Sutton 1985:60). Indeed, the connection with the radio station is significant, because such bimusical or polymusical competence seems particularly cultivated by musicians in these kinds of urban contexts. The reasons for this are not difficult to ascertain. Such contexts provide a large range of musical styles in a relatively small geographic area, and this in turn provides a potentially large number of employment opportunities for those able and skilled enough to take advantage of them. Nor is this a recent phenomenon. Daniel Neuman (1978) has shown how rural musicians in the Hindustani tradition evolved various adaptive strategies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as increasing numbers of them migrated to the urban areas of Delhi, an environment that encouraged them to become proficient in musical styles or instruments outside of their previous narrow specialisms. Similar patterns of socio-musical change are evident among musicians in the Carnatic tradition in Madras (see L'Armand and L'Armand 1978:140). Such adaptability, therefore, would seem to be a natural consequence of the particular and varied demands made of musicians in the urban context.

I wish to suggest that these kinds of adaptive strategies, where musicians expand their range of performance skills to cater to a fragmented landscape of different performance opportunities, are particularly noticeable in our own Western urban centres. This is increasingly the case even for musicians who might nominally be described as performers of Western art music, and who are likely to have received the rigorous conservatory training which underpins this tradition, a tradition which might not be thought by many to lend itself comfortably to the kind of adaptability required. This expanded range of skills is called upon in two distinct ways: first, through the increasingly eclectic approach to musical composition in many genres, which results in hybridized musical compositions that reference or draw upon a range of stylistic sources; and second, to survive in the competitive world of freelance work, musicians must be able to participate in a range of different events, each of which may well be characterized by different performance and other codes.

In the present context the first category—in which different codes are represented within the same musical work—is perhaps of less significance than the second, and I shall deal with it only briefly. In the increasingly



postmodern approach to Western art music composition many pieces have evolved which call upon musicians to perform in ways that would not have been covered by their initial training. These would be the Western art equivalents of what Slobin, writing perhaps before the terms intertextuality and multitextuality had become firmly inscribed in academic discourse, describes as “multi code songs.” In the art music context, the increasing diversity of compositional styles that has arisen over the last half century makes rigid categorization increasingly difficult. We see composers such as Steve Martland or John Zorn working closely with musicians from the jazz and rock worlds; Mark Anthony Turnage writes for jazz players in his piece *Blood on the Floor*; Kevin Volans uses African sources in works such as *White Man Sleeps*, while Tan Dun uses Chinese sources in many of his works, such as his “Crouching Tiger” concerto series. Equally, we can observe those often categorized as jazz or pop composers being commissioned to write for non-improvising, even classical ensembles. Paul McCartney’s forays into the field of classical music (e.g. *The Liverpool Oratorio*), or Elvis Costello’s ballet *Il Sogno* provide obvious examples.

These multi-code pieces inevitably have consequences for those professional performing musicians whose job it is to recreate them, since even within the context of one piece musicians may find themselves called upon to perform convincingly in a number of noticeably different styles to a level that I would describe as being rather better than just a passable pastiche. Such pieces can be identified throughout the twentieth century, as demonstrated by perhaps the most famous example of these crossovers. George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, the orchestral version of which was completed in 1926, begins with a now instantly recognizable upward clarinet glissando followed by a bluesy phrase that, in Gershwin’s original recordings of the piece at least, and often elsewhere, is executed with further swoops and glissandos. Being Gershwin, of course, the jazz reference is obvious. Yet that kind of clarinet smear is by no means part of “conventional” or classical clarinet training, and requires from the orchestral clarinetist a different set of cognitive and practical skills in order to execute it convincingly. In my own college years I well remember an otherwise very competent clarinetist (now working professionally) who, by his own admission, never really managed the technique successfully. The need to execute convincingly these occasional references to performance styles well beyond those which constitute the bedrock of Western art music training will be familiar to most professional musicians.

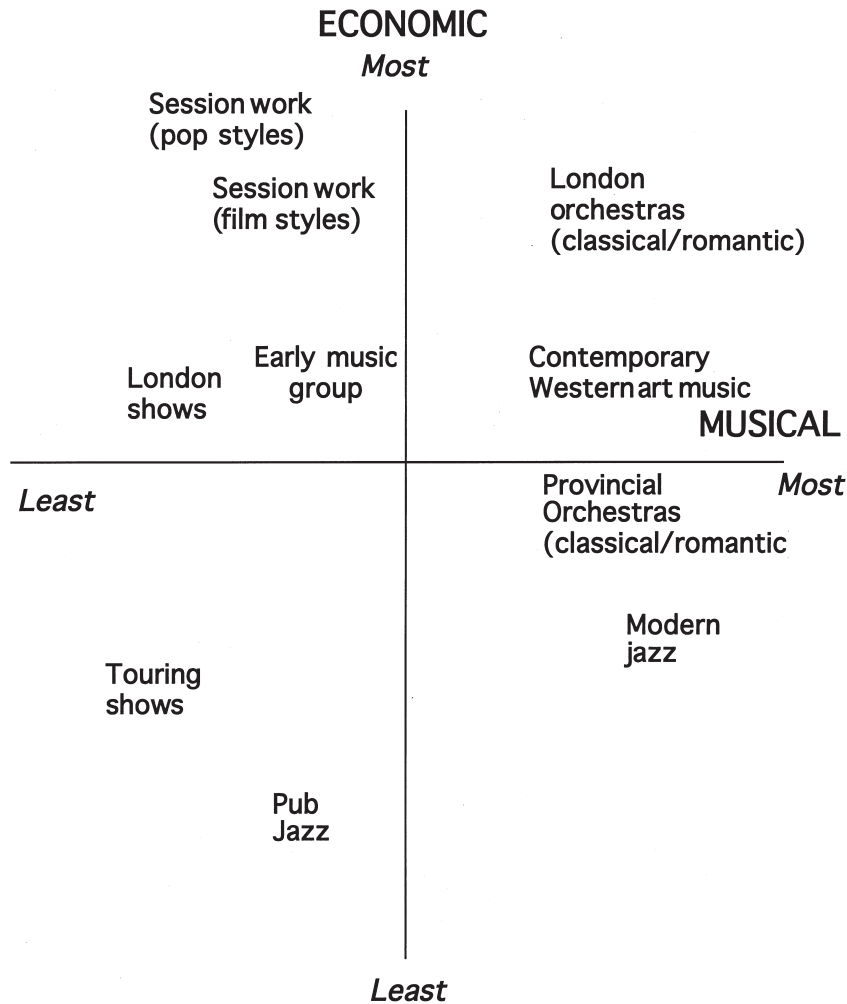
Here my primary focus is on the strategies musicians employ to sustain themselves within a complex, differentiated urban environment. In a city such as London, where there is a great deal of competition for seemingly diminishing amounts of paid musical work, musicians need to be competent enough to undertake entire performances in as many different styles or codes

as possible in order to maximize their work opportunities and hence their income. Indeed, it might be argued that the increasing economic stresses perceived by institutions and individuals working in art music contexts notably exacerbates this need for flexibility, since musicians must augment their incomes from as wide a range of performance opportunities as possible. In London, for example, a busy freelance musician might be called upon to undertake, within the space of a few weeks, some orchestral work with one of the major orchestras, a contemporary music date with a smaller ensemble, a few performances in a West End musical, and perhaps a backing track for a film or a pop group, etc., all of which require not only different social skills and knowledge of the different performance conventions, but also a clear understanding of the performance aesthetics underlying these various styles. Such skills are fundamental to a musician's employability: the more styles you are convincing in, the more work you are available for, and the busier and therefore wealthier you are likely to be.

Elsewhere I have argued that the manner in which freelance musicians attempt to balance the economic and cultural parameters of the various employment opportunities available to them reveals to us something of their self-conception as musicians (Cottrell 2004:56–76). As part of this argument I constructed a diagram similar to that in Figure 1, showing how particular engagements might be conceptualized by a freelance musician when deciding which to accept and which to reject. Although the original arguments—the balancing of economic and musical capitals—are less relevant here, I use the same diagram again simply to show how varied these different performance opportunities can be.

I hope this diagram is in fact fairly self evident: different types of performance event yield different quantities of what I have described as capital: economic capital being real money, the fee for the engagement; musical capital being a rather more abstract measure of the value placed on the engagement by the performer according to its prestige, or significance in the context of their own aspirations, etc. In the present context I use it mainly to indicate something of the variety of potential employment opportunities available to London's professional musicians, although the issues related to self-conception and bimusicality will be revisited below. It is worth noting, however, that for many freelancers, such variety of work is one of the few attractions mitigating the often difficult and insecure lifestyles to which they have submitted themselves (see Cottrell 2004:77). I should also point out that because I constructed this particular diagram, it is very much a subjective expression of my own self-conception as a musician working in London. Others would certainly map different performance events in different places, more clearly reflecting their own self-conceptions as manifested through their own preferences. Some might also include musical events in which I do not

**Figure 1. Relationship between economic and musical capitals.**



participate—weddings, bar mitzvahs, and so forth—or of course engagements relating to ethnic communities with which they may be involved. Such differences would inevitably result in contrasting diagrams to the one represented here, and it is precisely these differences that distinguish underlying concepts of self.

Such variety of work, however, does require a sophisticated understanding of both the different performance skills and the social conventions re-

quired to participate competently in these different events; my argument here is that to a significant degree these changes between different styles resemble Hood's notion of bimusicality, and certainly Slobin's views on code switching. Admittedly, the different skills required may not involve, for example, different interval structures in quite the way that Hood suggests, since most of the performance events listed in the diagram above are predicated upon the system of equal temperament and functional harmony (although there are exceptions to this in the fields of early and contemporary music, at least). But the bending of intervals in certain performance styles would come close to this. Bending a note in a jazz or pop context might seem a relatively straightforward operation for those outside these traditions. In fact such inflections require a great deal of understanding about the contexts in which certain notes might be bent, by how far, for how long, and so forth. Professional musicians are quick to identify those whom they feel lack stylistic sympathy. As somebody who once incurred the wrath of a musical director for not being able to bend notes in the way he preferred, I can assert that lacking such skills can have very real consequences.

There are also some contemporary pieces that require playing in just intonation or microtones, which certain performers are unwilling to learn, with the consequence that they would choose not to be involved in areas that might require them to engage with these techniques. There are very different styles of improvisation required in various jazz contexts: what I have described as "pub jazz" is often "traditional" or "New Orleans-style" jazz that usually demands improvised solos that remain closer to the underlying chords than those of, say, bebop, which would make greater use of 9th, 11th and 13th extensions; and both of these would be different again to the kinds of pop music performance styles and solos. The demands made of performers working in early music ensembles—with an emphasis these days frequently on purity and transparency of sound together with specialized knowledge of the types of ornamentation appropriate to particular pieces—are noticeably different from those made of performers working in orchestras performing Classical or Romantic repertory. Performing Romantic repertory the latter in particular might require *rubato*, flexibility, perhaps even *portamento* in the case of the strings, in a way that would almost certainly be inappropriate elsewhere.

The different timbral qualities required from musicians in these various contexts is also revealing of the different cognitive bases upon which participation in them is founded. The different types of sound required from, say, a trumpeter in an orchestra is fundamentally different from that of a jazz group; as noted above, the sound demanded from string players in early music groups is again very different from that required in large symphony orchestras. I have argued elsewhere that the ways in which musicians con-

ceive of their own individual sound, and the manner in which the timbral qualities of such sounds are manipulated in different contexts, provide both a metaphor for and are integral parts of the social relationships between musicians and the tensions which inevitably inhere between the individual and the group in the essentially social act of professional musical production (Cottrell 2004:44–55). Musicians commonly working in these different areas sometimes play on different instruments so that they may meet the demands made of them more easily. String players may change instrument or bow according to context; brass and wind players often use different mouthpieces and other accessories to help them produce the different types of sound required. But these technical paraphernalia are of secondary importance to the cognitive requirements; conceptualizing these various sounds and understanding the changing timbral aesthetics relating to these different performance traditions requires each musician to inhabit a different cognitive space as they move between them. Learning to be sonic chameleons is an essential part of the bimusical behavior musicians employ as a natural consequence of their urban working environments. I am not suggesting, of course, that all musicians play in all of these different areas. That would be very unusual. But all freelance musicians, in order to make a living, do need to make themselves employable in as many areas as they can, in order to survive in the competitive professional environments in which they work. Competent participation in each of these different contexts necessarily requires rather different cognitive and practical skills.

The execution of the performance codes demanded by these different occasions must equally be supplemented by a sophisticated understanding of and competence in a wide range of other associated codes. Dress codes are one obvious element: neither the dinner jacket of the orchestral setting nor the obligatory “all black” dress of the theatre pit would necessarily be appropriate for the modern jazz event; the ubiquitous “black trousers and a coloured shirt” favoured by many contemporary music ensembles would look out of place in the orchestra. But there are other rather more subtle skills to be learned about behavior patterns in particular contexts. This is especially the case in the more formal settings associated with orchestras. A freelance string player observed to me that:

There are lots of social skills about being in an orchestra which you’re not really trained to do, you just pick them up bit by bit. Like don’t practise your concertos in the band room. And there’s a lot of etiquette within an orchestral section. If you’re on the back desk of the violins never ask the conductor what he thinks about something, ask the principal violin. There’s a lot of etiquette which you’re not really taught and I think it’s very important. I know lots of people who have been rubbed from dates because their etiquette wasn’t correct. People standing up and talking to other sections from within a section. They should always go through the principal of a section, that’s why they’re there. (p.c.)

Robert E. Faulkner quotes another musician articulating similar warnings about inappropriate patterns of behavior among Hollywood studio musicians:

Some players come into town and try to undercut the guys already established out here; they don't survive one week, they're through before they start. . . For instance, some guys come into town, call up every goddamn contractor and say "A told me to call you, B said this and that, you know . . . use me . . ." And then on a date a contractor comes up to you and asks you if the guy was recommended by you. If we don't know him or didn't recommend him, well that guy's in trouble, and he'll have problems getting any work with us and the top contractors. (Faulkner 1971:102)

These allusions to the autodidactic learning inherent in the development of cultural proficiency serve as reminders that this is a significant component of becoming bimusical, albeit one that it is sometimes overlooked in favour of conventional patterns of learning. Hood's 1960 article lays great emphasis on the idea of "training," and clearly the specialist input from some kind of expert is essential when engaging with an unfamiliar music culture. But it is also true that all forms of learning involve understandings and experience that may be elicited outside of the discourse between "teacher" and "pupil." Immersion in any music culture inevitably means exposure to a variety of stimuli from which one can learn: perhaps from hearing or observing others, listening to recordings, etc. Bimusicality thus involves not only the conventional pedagogic relationship between teacher(s) and pupil, but also engagement at an autodidactic level. The benefits arising from reflection upon the learning process for the ethnomusicologist have been outlined above, but for the professional Western musician, especially those seeking to establish themselves in new or unfamiliar musical areas, this "on the job" learning is an important aspect of their professional development, one which requires, as the quotes above demonstrate, familiarity with a range of both musical and socio-cultural codes.

Notwithstanding the differences between these various performance events, it is clear that many of them do share characteristics that relate them. In particular, the use of staff notation would seem to be a unifying feature of many of these musical styles, albeit that it is more central to some than others. Some familiarity with this notation is therefore generally prerequisite for musicians working in most of these fields. But prescriptive notation of any sort requires engagement with aural tradition in order to facilitate its reconstitution. Dots appearing on a page are only a guide as to how the music should be performed, and are subject to considerable interpretation by those who are familiar with the aural history relating to that particular style. To give the most obvious example, swung (jazz) quavers may be represented as eighth notes, as dotted eighth and sixteenth notes, or indeed as triplet quarter/eighth

note patterns. However, many jazz musicians will argue that none of these various orthographies actually represents the way they should be played, and indeed, such swung quavers would be played differently in New Orleans style, swing and bebop forms of jazz. A similar argument could be advanced for the performance of *notes inégales*, found in certain types of baroque music (particularly French), that requires performers to be equally familiar with the uneven stresses in the performance of duple quavers, notwithstanding that there is nothing in the notation to indicate this. Furthermore, a particular short phrase may well provoke markedly different performances in a Classical symphony by Mozart than would occur in a work by, say, Xenakis, or as part of a pop music backing track, but the notation might conceivably be the same in all these contexts. In each case, therefore, a sophisticated conceptualization of the differences between these various performance traditions, one informed by knowledge of the aural tradition surrounding them, is required to execute them properly.

It might be reasonably argued, therefore, that these surface representations of music theory—the similar use of staff notation—again mask different cognitive approaches to these various musical contexts. In this they are perhaps reminiscent of other musical traditions where different cognitive structures underlie apparently similar surface representations. A different facet of John Baily's work, the comparison between traditional Afghan and Hindustani music, provides an example. Baily has shown that these two geographically adjacent traditions, as one might expect, share many common features in their music making, including the use of a large repertoire of verbal terms as part of their music theory. Baily's work focuses on the use of *tabla bols*, a non-graphic notation comprising a variety of syllables or mnemonics, which are used to encode playing patterns on the tabla, the Indian drums. He shows that this shared music theory, as represented by these mnemonics, is used somewhat differently in these two areas. He writes that "in Afghanistan music theory is mainly a representational model. It is a post hoc theory, which organises, systematises, and explains what is already part of performance practice. In India the theory serves a more operational role. It is certainly involved in the learning process" (1988:122). Baily demonstrates that in these two different situations, in which the surface material shares a considerable number of similar characteristics, the music theory underlying them is used in two quite different ways, and hence the cognitive structures predicated upon this theory are also different; in the Afghan context it is representational, or to put it another way, largely descriptive, while in the Indian context it is operational, an a priori requirement to musical performance.

Of course, it would be wrong to suggest that exactly the same happens in the Western context. The underlying cognitive structures are unlikely to be as clearly differentiated in the various "Western" traditions as Baily sug-



gests for his South Asian examples, although he does write that the latter are “closely related but distinct” (1988:122), a description that might equally apply to some of our own traditions. A further, most significant, difference is that the various performance traditions of the West do of course *sound* noticeably different, perhaps more so than the Afghan/Hindustani traditions. However, the relationship between the notation underpinning these different Western traditions and the sounds which comprise them changes in a manner analogous to that of these South Asian musics; while it appears to be used in the same way, it in fact represents contrasting cognitive approaches to the performance aesthetics of each style. While the theory appears to be the same, the application of that theory changes according to the aural tradition within which it is located. In order to navigate their way through these different styles, musicians must develop their cognitive abilities to the point at which it feels “natural” to be participating in any given event.

Further evidence of the different cognitive positions adopted in these various performance traditions may also be inferred from the different somatic states to which they give rise.<sup>5</sup> Although it may be too simplistic to argue that performers in the art music traditions tend to have more tension in performance than others, it is certainly the case that there are particular, quite formal, behavior patterns expected in certain areas, especially in orchestras. Performers who move about a great deal in orchestras tend to be regarded unfavorably, as the following string player in a London orchestra makes clear: “People who move about a tremendous amount when they play can be upsetting in a string section. It’s just a distraction. It’s a distraction if you see somebody thrashing around, and you’re trying to just concentrate on being very precise, following the beat carefully, just doing the job, in an ordinary non-fussy sort of way” (p.c.). In part this is because there are many small body movements from musicians in orchestras that are essential for cuing and synchronization, and that individuals capture through peripheral vision; unnecessary or exaggerated movement elsewhere disturbs this process. In contrast, string quartet players tend to move about considerably more, in part because the musical communication between the members of the group is reinforced through these physical gestures,<sup>6</sup> but also because the more intimate nature of the event allows—indeed encourages—such behavior.

The somatic states of string quartet players would still be regarded as quite formal, however, were these to be replicated in other contexts, particularly in popular fields, where such behavior might be taken as a sign that a musician was not, in fact, “in the groove.” My own experience as a saxophone player has alerted me to the existence of “jazz shoulder.” A number of jazz saxophonists raise their right shoulder when engrossed in constructing their improvisations (a movement which is in part encouraged by the disposition of the hands and arms when holding the saxophone).<sup>7</sup> But observing these

1 same musicians in other contexts, particularly in theatre pits but occasion-  
 2 ally in orchestras also, one never sees the same behavior, which would be  
 3 considered, in fact, rather odd in these other environments. The differing  
 4 physical postures and behavior adopted can be read as markers of different  
 5 cognitive states in these different performance events.

6 Singers in particular have much to reveal about the various somatic states  
 7 required in different contexts, because of the essentially embodied nature of  
 8 their performances. Hood himself draws attention to this when he writes, in  
 9 relation to studying Javanese singing, that a student must "imitate the proper  
 10 shape of the mouth, the position of the tongue, the attitude of the head, the  
 11 tension in neck muscles and even to a degree the revealing facial expressions  
 12 which are an open window to the singer's unconscious muscular control"  
 13 (Hood 1960:58). Similar language, however, might be used to describe musi-  
 14 cians moving between certain Western traditions. A London singer working  
 15 across a range of styles offered the following observation:

16 When you do classical music like opera you support your voice, and to support  
 17 the voice you have to stay in a certain position. You can't support the voice if  
 18 you're relaxed physically. [But] musicals or jazz, it's not the same. Well, musicals  
 19 actually are a crossover thing, because a lot of musicals are sung in an operatic  
 20 way, and if they're sung in an operatic way or are written in an operatic way you  
 21 have to do this support thing, so you will stand in a slightly more held manner.  
 22 It doesn't mean you're stiff on stage it just means you've got a certain amount  
 23 of tension, to hold the body and to hold the support system. But if you're doing  
 24 jazz, or a musical where it's all on the mike and you don't have to support at all  
 25 really, because that's the point of the mike, you don't need to do this, you can  
 26 relax bodily. (p.c.)

27 This would appear to be something of an extreme view, since many singers  
 28 would argue that even when using a microphone certain levels of support  
 29 and technical competence are still required. But while such postures are  
 30 clearly allied to musicianship and the technical knowledge of how and when  
 31 to produce a particular type of sound, the somatic states within which such  
 32 musicianship may said to be, literally, embodied, can again be read as mark-  
 33 ers of the different underlying cognitive positions adopted by performers as  
 34 they move from one performance style to another.

### 35 **Local Bimusicality**

36 To what extent, however, does this ability to participate competently in  
 37 these different events, and the musical styles they contain, truly constitute  
 38 bimusicality? Or, to return to Baily's problematization of the original concept,  
 39 how different do these traditions have to be before travelling between them  
 40 becomes construed as bimusicality? Here we are in danger of constructing a  
 41  
 42  
 43

circular argument: in order to determine whether such behavior constitutes bimusicality, we have clearly to define what bimusicality is, yet bimusicality only covers such eventualities if we want to use the term to embrace these contexts. Lacking a more explicit definition tempts us to use the term in a sufficiently indiscriminate way that the concept itself becomes meaningless. In fact Hood (1960:59), possibly envisioning something of the difficulties that were to lie ahead in relation to the term bimusicality, finishes his article by observing that the various prefixes which could be appended to the root “musicality”—“bi,” “tri,” “quadri,” etc.—could simply be subsumed under an expanded notion of “musicality” itself.

One might argue that Hood, in alighting on the word “musicality,” made an unfortunate choice in the first place, since musicality is implicitly difficult to define; its slippery nature is revealed as soon as it is subject to scrutiny. In the West, as Henry Kingsbury points out (1988:76–80), to describe somebody as having high musicality, as being very musical, is often to make a value judgement about the nature of their expressive musical output; very musical individuals are thus described as possessing musical “talent.” In Kingsbury’s view, therefore, musicality is a product of social ascription, which reveals as much about those who make such judgements as those upon whom they are made, and which contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities through the creation of a music elite (notwithstanding that “talent” is often popularly believed to be an innate quality possessed in greater quantities by certain individuals than others, and thus is used colloquially in quite the opposite fashion). Such value judgements run quite contrary to Hood’s intentions, of course. His concern was with individuals expanding their performance abilities in order to engage competently with the music making of other cultures, so as to better understand the bases upon which those music cultures might be predicated. It is reasonable to suggest, however, that this kind of musical craftsmanship is perhaps better expressed by the English word “musicianship” than it is by “musicality,” which adds yet another layer of complexity to this terminological inexactitude.

However, I do not feel the term “bimusicality” should be entirely abandoned, despite its limitations, if only because, at a purely pragmatic level, it has come to be widely understood as a way of expressing musical competence in disparate styles. To suggest that such competence achieved by one individual can be embraced by the generic word “musicality” (or indeed, “musicianship”) risks obscuring the very real differences between the styles themselves. Like many terms we employ—for example, “professional,” “community,” even “music” itself—meaning inheres through usage rather than through unambiguous definition, and words may well come to encompass meanings beyond those implied by their etymological roots. We need only consider the word “ethnomusicology”—now similarly bereft of a hyphen—to understand how

1 definitions can change according to the negotiations of those who use them  
 2 frequently.<sup>8</sup> Thus I have chosen to retain the word bimusicality here, while  
 3 being conscious of the dangers and limitations that accompany it.

4 I wish to argue, therefore, that the cognitive flexibility demonstrated  
 5 by many professional musicians in the urban situation does in some ways  
 6 parallel Hood's notion of bimusicality. The competent participation in these  
 7 performance traditions and the re-creation of the different musical styles they  
 8 contain is necessarily grounded upon a cognitive understanding of the musi-  
 9 cal differences between them. And the successful execution of stylistically  
 10 appropriate musical patterns must also be allied to a sensitive understanding  
 11 of those other behavioral codes that relate to a particular tradition, and that  
 12 provide the context within which the musical performance itself occurs.

13 The musician's view of the events in which he or she is engaged is also  
 14 significant. Returning to the diagram introduced above, I would reassert that  
 15 this was originally intended as a demonstration of self-conception and thus  
 16 other musicians would produce different maps from the one presented here.  
 17 In part, however, such mapping arises not only from our manipulation of aes-  
 18 thetic and economic preferences, but also our competence in and familiarity  
 19 with the different performance codes relating to each event. And it is here  
 20 that the concept of bimusicality is perhaps most usefully conceived of in this  
 21 context: for specialist musicians, and especially for many of those working  
 22 in urban environments, bimusicality is neither a research technique nor a  
 23 metaphor; it is a component of self-conception, a way of both acquainting and  
 24 aligning oneself with a combination of different performance aesthetics in  
 25 order that an individual musician may discharge any one of them competently  
 26 when called upon so to do. Amongst a variety of codes which must neces-  
 27 sarily be assimilated, participation in these events is particularly grounded  
 28 upon a cognitive understanding of the often substantial musical differences  
 29 between them, differences which are frequently not explicit in the notation  
 30 upon which many such events are apparently predicated. This kind of bi- or  
 31 polymusicality is continually subject to scrutiny, not by indigenous teachers  
 32 or academic peers, but by the most unforgiving and discerning of individuals:  
 33 those other musicians with whom one must play and upon whom one's future  
 34 employment prospects depend. Thus it is certainly necessary, as Hornbostel  
 35 would have it, to perform to the satisfaction of the natives, because in some  
 36 cases it is likely to be the natives—the orchestral contractors, bandleaders  
 37 or musical directors—who are writing out the check. Failure to perform  
 38 competently will lead to reduced bookings, or indeed none at all.

39 I propose that this movement of musicians within and among the perfor-  
 40 mance traditions that surround them should be recognized as "local bimusi-  
 41 cality," a term that I use to describe the successful movement of an individual  
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performer between musical traditions that may be rather different from the one in which they were initially trained, but in which, for reasons of social or economic expediency, they have subsequently felt it desirable to become proficient. Such performance traditions may be closely related, as in the case of early music ensembles and string quartets, or they may be only tenuously connected, as in the case of symphony orchestras and bebop jazz groups. But in the Western urban context particularly, because of the proximity of these numerous different styles, freelance professional musicians become very cognizant of the differences which distinguish them and highly skilled in reproducing as wide a range of styles as possible, in order to mitigate the economic stresses of a notoriously insecure profession.

Returning briefly to the analogy with language, perhaps we might conceive local bimusicality as more akin to a movement between different dialects, rather than a movement between separate languages, as Hood seems initially to have conceived the term, particularly since, in the Western traditions at least, many of these musical styles are to some degree interrelated. Consider the following:

These local traditions... are more like dialects than separate languages, but what might be called "minor" differences can be of crucial significance in the realm of aesthetics. While all these styles are in a certain sense "mutually intelligible," with a considerable overlap in basic musical structure, the feeling they evoke [and their inner meanings or mood] are distinct from one another. Moreover, the meaning that each style holds for an individual... depends on that person's local identity and may, in turn, help to define that identity. (Sutton 1985:61)

This seems to me to encapsulate perfectly the everyday use of local bimusicality among professional musicians in London, which I have attempted to set out above. But Sutton is not writing about "Western" traditions, he is writing about musicians in Java. Clearly, it is not only in our own urban centers where local bimusicality—the assimilation by one individual of a variety of musical styles—underpins issues of musical self-conception and individual identity.

Understanding how musicians in our own urban environments use and conceptualize such skills appears not only a useful prerequisite to understanding how similar skills are employed elsewhere, but also a starting point for engaging with those world music fusions that continue to challenge the discipline of ethnomusicology. Such musical fusions can seldom be ascribed to distinct cultural groups, as ethnomusicologists have previously frequently sought to assert. If, as appears to be the case, we are moving away from ontological definitions of the discipline as being for example "the study of music as culture" (Merriam 1977:204), and towards more praxiological definitions such as "the study of people making music" (Tito 1992:xxi), then it behoves us to understand more about the knowledge, skills and insights which particular

musicians take with them as they move from one performance tradition to another, and how these inform musical outcomes. A greater understanding of local bimusicality in a range of urban contexts around the globe would provide an important start to this work.

## Acknowledgments

A shorter version of this article was read at the SEM conference in Tucson, Arizona, November 2004, some months before the passing of Ki Mantle Hood in July 2005. As chance would have it, at the November 2005 SEM conference in Atlanta, while this article was undergoing review, I found myself having supper with Mantle Hood's widow Hazel and his son Made—whom I had not previously met—immediately after the memorial session held in Hood's honour. I had not until then realized that, like myself, Mantle Hood was a saxophonist (as is Made, now a lecturer at Monash University), who partly financed his way through college by playing the saxophone in dance bands and such like. Since this article is in part based on my own experiences as a freelance saxophonist, I hope that Hood would have at least been intrigued by it. Thus the article is dedicated both to the memory of Mantle Hood himself, and in tribute to the warm hospitality demonstrated to me in Atlanta by his family. A version of the full article was also read as part of the inaugural lecture series of the Centre for Contemporary Music Cultures at Goldsmiths College, London. I am grateful for the feedback offered by Professor John Baily and others at that session. I am also grateful for the observations made by my two anonymous readers and the editor, which have undoubtedly strengthened the article.

## Notes

1. Hood's original spelling included a hyphen. Today this hyphen is frequently dropped (as my own preference demonstrates), a surreptitious practice that is reminiscent of that which similarly transformed the term "ethno-musicology." While this would appear to represent little more than orthographic convenience, it might be argued that it does somehow establish "bimusicality" as a more substantial and wide-ranging concept than that implied by the simple addition of a numerical prefix to an—admittedly nebulous—existing concept, in much the same way that "ethnomusicology" appears now as a more distinctive discipline than as a subset of something else. This broader conception of the term is implicit in what follows.

2. For a more extensive consideration of these issues, see Cottrell (2004:8–15). Note that because the original interviews were granted on condition of anonymity it has been necessary to retain such anonymity in this article.

3. In fact Baily (forthcoming) advocates the adoption of the term "intermusability" in place of bimusicality, where "inter" refers to "more than one," and "musability" is the contraction of musicality and ability.

4. For more on the Hood-Merriam polemic see, for example, Averill (2004:109n2).

5. I am grateful to Kathryn Woodard for suggesting this connection with somatic states.

6. There is a growing literature on the importance of gestural communication within musical performance. See for example Goodman (2002), or Williamon and Davidson (2002).

7. The British saxophonist Tony Coe is well known for this posture, but it can readily be observed in other musicians.

8. It is worth recalling Mark Slobin's observation that terms are "creatures of discourse, somewhere between stalking horses and red herrings." He goes on to cite James Clifford's observation that such terms "get us some distance and fall apart" before agreeing with Clifford that what is of interest is not the definition *per se*, "but what goes on in your head when you match terms with reality" (Slobin 1993:12–13).



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