Ethnography as Remix

This essay considers some methodological considerations related to the use of ethnography in my dissertation: a study of a small record label, monthly club night and London-based new music community called Nonclassical. The official aim of Nonclassical is to widen the appeal, participation and accessibility of contemporary classical music. This aim is promoted through a variety of activities, of which the Nonclassical remix project is central. Through this project, Nonclassical aims to produce albums of high quality contemporary classical music that also present remixes of this work. The process begins with the record label recording and producing material by a new contemporary classical ensemble. They then send the finished tracks to a variety of collaborators and ask them to provide their own remixes of the work. The final album is then made up of original tracks of contemporary classical music presented alongside a variety of remixes. It is hoped that this process will widen the participation and appeal of contemporary classical music amongst both producers and consumers from a wide variety of musical genres.

Drawing on Born (1995) I will consider the various 'mediations' of the remix, examining its technological, musical, social and commercial levels of meaning. The concept of mediations, which refers to analytically separable spaces of meaning, allows for musical meaning to inhere in the "social, theoretical, technological and visual mediations of music as well as in the sound itself" (Born, 1995: 23). As Fox (2005: 34) points out, 'mediation' is not just an analytical tool but also a productive process through which subjectivities form conceptual and intuitive links between ideologies and constructions of meaning related to music. This process is principally accomplished through the

construction, subversion and re-articulation of discourses and as such, my principle mode of inquiry is discursive. Here I advance a very broad understanding of discourse to include not just language (both verbal and written) but also actions, processes, constructions of meaning and regimes of truth through which actors live in the social world. My aim is to uncover tensions within discourses of music-making at Nonclassical, considering how these issues are experienced by community members and what effect they may have on Nonclassical's wider creative project.

I used a variety of methodologies during the research process. These included semi-structured interviews with artists and remixers, analysis of two key albums released on Nonclassical and a consideration of translocal phenomena such as discourses of modernism/postmodernism in music, capitalist flows of commodity exchange and the Western classical music zeitgeist. My primary method of analysis, however, was a one-month period of ethnographic fieldwork carried out at the Nonclassical offices in East London and participant-observation at four Nonclassical club nights between December 2010 and May 2011. I will consider some of the key issues relevant to the use of this methodology in my dissertation with particular reference to: the construction of the field site; methods of virtual ethnography; my polysemic role within the community; and the construction of the ethnographic text. Against this backdrop I will draw links between ethnography and the remix: considering some aspects of the ethnographic process through the lens of remixing and also comparing the ethnographic text to a remix object. This comparison is productive and aims at shedding light on issues of key importance to both concepts. The status of ethnography as methodology has long been discussed in anthropology and there are now well-worn debates over issues of authority, representation and otherness related to this method. Drawing links between the process of ethnography and remixing could advance the understanding of remixing as a

contentious process in which musical meanings are re-constructed and issues of representation are key. Moreover an understanding of the remix as a derivative creative text is well established. Considering ethnography in relation to the remix could help advance an understanding of the ethnographic account as a creative text that both draws on and distorts the original source material from which it is derived.

The Field Site

The offices of the record label in Bethnal Green have been an important centre of my research, locating Nonclassical firmly in the heart of a new East London characterised by its young, trendy crowd and 'cutting edge' bar and club scene. However, throughout the research process I found that the Bethnal Green offices were not the only centre of creativity for Nonclassical. Nonclassical commissions remixes from individuals across Europe and North America, sending them the stems[1] of their latest album and receiving their finished work through portals such as megaupload.com or 4shared.com[2]. Therefore much of the music-making in fact occurs in a variety of studios, offices, bedrooms or in fact any location where a laptop can be connected to the Internet.

My main aim throughout the research process was to build an understanding of the creative process of remixing at Nonclassical. Since the sites of creativity at Nonclassical are vastly dispersed – a situation that is not unusual amongst capitalist centres of music production today – my field site was not limited to the Nonclassical offices in which I carried out participant observation. Instead, I adopted a conceptualisation of the field site as what Kisliuk (1997: 29) refers to as "a broad conceptual zone united by a chain of inquiry". Thus, I drew heavily on the methodology of multi-sited ethnography, which

[1] The individual tracks of a recording that are then mixed to create a final track.
[2] These websites allow you to upload files such as audio tracks that are too big to send via email that can then be downloaded by those provided with the correct link.

aims to trace cultural formations across and within multiple sites of activity (Marcus, 1995; 1998). As Hine (2008: 267) points out, such a broad and shifting conceptualisation of the field site brings to light key questions relating to the politics of defining the field. Since the 1980s and due to the force of postcolonial critique, anthropologists have recognised the construction of the field site as tied up in political and colonial representations of the other (see Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Narayan, 1993: 676). Thus, the field is as much a construction of the ethnographer, and representation of their own notions of otherness, as it a pre-existing entity. Such a debate is particularly relevant in the context of multi-sited ethnography in which the field site is flexible and thus particularly dependent on the decision-making processes of the ethnographer. To avoid constructing a field site entirely based on personal experience, I adopted a particular mode of inquiry that would guide me through the multiple sites of my broad conceptual zone referred to as a "follow the thing" process.

As Marcus (1995: 106) points out, the method of "follow the thing" is central to many instances of multi-sited ethnography. This process, which constructs the space of research through tracing the circulations and contexts of a particular material object, has been particularly adopted in ethnographies of commodities (see Appadurai, 1986; Mintz, 1985; Wallerstein, 1991) and in studies of contemporary art and music production (Feld, 1994; Marcus & Myers, 1996; Savigliano, 1995). In the case of Nonclassical, my research was guided by the music. I focused on two key albums (*Cortical Songs*, 2009 and *Songspin*, 2011) and aimed to construct an understanding of the remix process on each, examining how audio material was exchanged between original artist and remixer in a relationship mediated by Nonclassical. In order to build up this picture, I literally followed the movement of Nonclassical audio files. Thus I travelled to any location to which audio material had been sent in order to speak to the remixers involved. This process took me

across London to a variety of studios and working environments where I discussed with remixers their experiences of working on the project and thoughts about the work they had produced. In some cases, remixers were based in distant parts of the country or outside of the UK (primarily in France and Canada) and so my journey to these locations was conducted virtually over the Internet (I will return to the notion of virtual ethnography later).

A "follow the music" mode of inquiry, allowed me to examine the ways that audio material was creatively exchanged between a number of actors. Equally, through focusing on one key object – the remix – I was able to consider how particular mediations of musical meaning were re-negotiated as the object passed between original artist, record label and remixer. This also meant that an understanding of the structure of the system in which the remixes were created emerged ethnographically through the process of fieldwork. Thus, I avoided assuming a priori the construction of the community and instead allowed the social and commercial relations governing Nonclassical to emerge through an examination of the shifting status of the remix as it moved between actors. Moreover, this process allowed me to follow the remix to different terrains of conflict and tension as it was exchanged within the community.

However, there were limitations to adopting a multi-sited field and "follow the music" mode of inquiry. Firstly, that the music in question was a commodity product owned and produced by the Nonclassical record label inadvertently tied me to the central body that was the focus of my research. This meant that in my interactions with remixers, artists and other collaborators, I was often considered to be an instrument of Nonclassical and as a result, some interlocutors were unsure about expressing their criticisms of the label. (I will discuss this issue further when considering the various roles I occupied through

the research process). Secondly, by focusing specifically on the movement of music, it was difficult to build up a picture of the artists and remixers that was distinct from their involvement with Nonclassical. That is, each collaborator brought with them a complex biography of musical experience and working practices that formed the backdrop of their work on the remix project. My focus on the movement of the music meant that the background of each collaborator was sometimes obscured in favour of a focus on their specific experiences as part of the Nonclassical remix project. I did, however, endeavour to correct this balance in interviews in questioning each collaborator about their musical history.

Against this backdrop I would draw links between the processes of ethnography and remixing. The remix object brings with it connotations of co-authorship, continually evolving creativity, and an object whose aesthetic influences are spread across a wide cultural landscape. It thus implies spatial and temporal unboundedness and stands in direct opposition to a modernist discourse that has considered musical creativity as based on a singular moment of enlightenment flowing from an isolated author. Similarly the processes of multi-sited ethnography necessarily imply a transcending of bounded spatial contexts and problematise hitherto constructions of the ethnographic field as singular. Considering the process of ethnography through a paradigm of the remix could facilitate a consideration of the field site as a broad, distanciated and constantly evolving chain of inquiry in which multiple actors interact. Moreover, that the physical transformation of the remix can be charted as it moves between actors could help sharpen the focus on the ways in which the ethnographic method is constantly and creatively undergoing transformation. This will continue to move the ethnographic method away from notions of the field site as singular and bounded (see Gupta & Ferguson, 1997) at the same time as enabling my project to build up an understanding of the workings of the remix project

at Nonclassical as they stretch across spatial and temporal locations.

Virtual Ethnography

Due to the fact that my research site was broad and distanciated, the methods of virtual ethnography were particularly important to my study. Virtual ethnography refers to a method of ethnographic research that was established in the 1990s in order to study the social spaces of the Internet (Hine, 2008: 257). Early approaches argued for the consideration of online groupings as important sites of lived social realities and thus tended to focus on a particular online setting as a field site to which the ethnographer would virtually travel (see Baym, 2000; Cornell, 1995; Reid, 1994). Later work, however, challenged the notion of a separation between online and offline worlds and thus endeavoured to construct a framework for ethnographic research that could move freely between online and offline interactions (Constable, 2003; Ruhelder, 2000; Sade-Beck, 2004). Although virtual ethnographic methods were developed specifically in order to study social interactions online, they are relevant to any ethnographic context in which interaction can be described as 'virtual'.

The methods of virtual ethnography are particularly suited to my study because a number of Nonclassical remixers were based outside of London or the UK (specifically in France and Canada), and as such my interactions with them were conducted over Skype[3]. Of the eighteen interviews I carried out during my fieldwork, six were conducted in this way. Drawing on Hine (2000: 45) I adopt a conceptualisation of the process of travel to the field site as based on "experiential rather than physical displacement". This allowed me to construct a field site that was based neither entirely online nor offline, neither

---

[3] A programme that allows you to talk for free to individuals across the world using the Internet. The programme includes a video-conferencing option such that you can see the person you are talking to you.

completely experienced nor virtual. Considering the field as an experiential rather than a physical domain also allowed me to move freely between the various contexts of the remix project and build up an understanding of the way music was exchanged within this community. This method equally enabled me to bring together the music-making narratives of a variety of remixers working in distanciated spatial and musical contexts. Such a process also challenges the ascendancy of 'seen' and 'experienced' knowledge in anthropology that has been a matter of much debate since the 1980s (see Clifford, 1987: 11; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Wills & Trondman, 2000: 6).

However there are limitations to the virtual ethnographic approach. That I was unable to observe creative processes meant I relied heavily on retrospective and potentially inaccurate or self-serving individual narratives of experience. The question of how to trust interlocutors is a key issue related to the method of virtual ethnography. Many writers have focused on the difficulties in establishing the credibility of interlocutors' testimonies due to the relative anonymity of online interaction (James & Busher, 2006). In the context of my virtual interactions, interlocutors had relatively little anonymity and yet the question of trust was still an important one. I would suggest, however, that this issue is relevant to all ethnographic encounters and not just those that take place virtually or through an online medium. As Hine (2008: 263-4) points out, in ethnography there is always potential for deceit and interlocutors can just as easily present inaccurate narratives in offline interactions. Moreover, since the 1980s a wide literature has questioned the authority of the ethnographic account itself, constructing ethnographers as "tricksters" (Crapanzano, 1992: 386) involved in the production rather than reflection of culture (Clifford & Marcus, 1987). Thus issues of authenticity and credibility are endemic in wider ethnographic practice.

In any case, my data was not entirely drawn from virtual interaction. While my interaction with some of the remixers and artists was virtual, my experience of the Nonclassical offices and process of assembling the final album product was based on participant observation. The Nonclassical offices acted as a creative hub where the wide variety of music-making narratives from various remixers and artists would eventually congregate in the form of a finished remix or original work. Of the two albums that were the focus of my study, *Songspin* (2011) was in the post-production phase during my time at Nonclassical. Thus I was able to directly observe the processes of compiling the finished album product, particularly involving the commisioning, critiquing, selecting and rejecting of remixes. This meant that remixer and artist narratives were contextualised alongside observed knowledge of the workings of Nonclassical and the processes of compiling the final product. Moreover, my understanding of specifically remixer narratives was considered alongside an analysis of their music. While a series of interviews may not have been sufficient to gain the full background to their experiences of working with Nonclassical, when our conversations were considered alongside their musical work, the analysis already became much richer.

Here again, links can be drawn between the processes of ethnography and remixing. In many cases my virtual interactions with distanciated remixers actually reflected the experience of these collaborators in their interactions with Nonclassical. Throughout the research process I found there to be very little collaboration between artists, remixers and the Nonclassical central body. Often, remixes were commissioned from unknown and distanciated remixers whose only interaction with Nonclassical was via email. Thus, the remixers who I interacted with over the Internet were those who, in many cases, had never met employees of Nonclassical, original artists or any fellow remixers and thus had a largely 'virtual' relationship to Nonclassical and its operations. Moreover, this formed

part of my wider "follow the music" mode of inquiry also. That is, of the remixers that I interacted with virtually, most received audio files over the Internet through file-sharing websites and many had never attended a Nonclassical club night nor heard the music they were remixing be performed live. Thus, the music reached them entirely through virtual portals and since my field site was to be constructed through a mapping of the movement of the music, it was appropriate that I should reach these remixers through virtual portals also. Drawing links between remixing and virtual ethnography, a method in which limitations of interaction have already been thematised, could shed new light on issues of distanciation and isolation in the remix project. Moreover, considering the problems and limitations I encountered in communicating with interlocutors over the Internet brought into sharper focus the difficulties remixers experienced in managing relationships with Nonclassical in this way.

Researcher-position

Due to the fact that interactions throughout the research process encompassed a variety of contexts, I found that my position within the community was constantly under re-negotiation. As Kisliuk (1997: 32) points out, this can put great pressure on the "quality and depth of research relationships" such that researchers are charged with managing a great deal of complex and intricate relations, all of which have the potential to enrich or damage their position within the community (see also Beaudry, 1997). This concern was particularly relevant in relation to my study of Nonclassical which, as a multi-sited ethnography, united a broad range of sites, each of which afforded particular roles and challenges for me as a researcher. Equally, that my research required me to physically (and virtually) move between different sites meant that I was constantly having to renegotiate rituals of entrance and departure. Thus I found that my position was constantly shifting and at many times encompassed a variety of different roles which I

will now consider.

(i)   Researcher

My primary role was of course as a researcher. My initial contact with Nonclassical was in the form of email correspondence with record label founder Gabriel Prokofiev and my first meeting with him and the Nonclassical team was at a club night held in December 2010. I attended the club night and talked to some of the performers and employees of Nonclassical in this informal atmosphere in which I was introduced as someone 'doing research' on Nonclassical, immediately defining my role within the community as one of academic interest. I continued to attend the proceeding club nights on a monthly basis, building up an informal relationship with those involved.

My formal relationship with the label began in March 2011 when I met the remaining employees and spent a month in the offices in Bethnal Green. My time in the offices was fruitful and interesting but at times frustrating and difficult also. The small-scale nature of operations in Nonclassical (apart from Gabriel Prokofiev there was only one permanent employee and two part-/full-time interns) meant it quickly became clear that I would not be able to define a role for myself in the office. I carried out a small number of tasks (researching blogs, editing the website, proofreading etc) but other than this, I found that much of the time there was very little for me to do in the offices. I explained the ethnographic method of participant-observation to my interlocutors in the office, perhaps as a means of excusing my apparent lack of action and here the role of 'researcher' became especially useful. My project and ties to a well-known academic institution (University of Oxford) leant authority and legitimacy to my position in the office, titles that, in hindsight, I leant heavily on when having to answer once more the question of 'what exactly are you doing here'? The title of 'researcher' allowed me to be

present at all the daily activities of Nonclassical without necessitating a specific role or set of responsibilities of which there were few in this small operation. However, at the same time this title perhaps prevented me from integrating into the Nonclassical operation and kept me at an academic distance from those I was interested in studying.

(ii)   Instrument of Nonclassical

A second role that I inhabited at times during the course of my research was that of an 'instrument of Nonclassical'. This role became particularly apparent during the process of interviewing Nonclassical remixers and original artists. I found that in my conversations with collaborators they were wary of talking candidly about Gabriel Prokofiev or the label, unsure as to whether I would relay their comments to him and jeopardise future relationships. This was especially true when talking to remixers who had had relatively little contact with Nonclassical since the completion of their remix either because they had completed it recently or because they had worked only on one release on the Nonclassical label. It soon became clear that many assumed me to be working in close connection with Gabriel Prokofiev and the label. Although I clearly explained that I was carrying out research for a dissertation, I emerged from the space of Nonclassical since I was their primary mode of contact with the record label since completing their submission. Equally, in many cases I was given contact details of the remixers and artists by Gabriel Prokofiev and in one case, introduced to them by him directly. Thus it was difficult to uncouple myself from the Nonclassical label as much as I insisted that I was carrying out research independently. I tried to manage these assumptions by presenting my own thoughts and concerns about the record label to the artists and remixers that I interviewed. However it was not clear to what extent I managed to present myself as an independent researcher rather than a writer taking part in an elaborate PR exercise.

(iii)   Musician/composer

Another key role that emerged during the process of my research was that of a 'musician/composer'. Although my interlocutors knew that I was a student of musicology, none were immediately aware that I am also a composer of electronic music. This side of my musical background gradually emerged during the course of fieldwork and opened up another important level of conversation and interaction. In the offices of Nonclassical, Gabriel Prokofiev often asked myself and other employees to listen to compositions he had recently completed and offer comments or suggestions. My newfound status as a composer was particularly important here as when this was discovered, I was offered a greater insight into his work. This role also opened up conversations with remixers who, on discovering my knowledge of the music sequencing software Logic Pro, were keen to show me the files of their remix. This elicited another level of discussion such that they were happy to talk in both musical and technical terms without having to explain the meaning of processes such as time-stretching[4], pitch-shifting[5], EQ[6], pan[7] etc.

Moreover, I was drawn into a number of conversations both within the offices of Nonclassical and amongst remixers and artists about my musical background and education. I was happy to explain that my musical education began from a strictly classical tradition and gradually migrated towards an interest in mixed media installations and electronic music. During this process, I moved from an institutional education in

---

[4] Changing the speed or duration of an audio sample without altering its pitch.

[5] Changing the pitch of an audio sample without altering its speed or duration.

[6] Allows you to adjust the balance of frequency components in an audio sample to change its sound. For example cutting all the bass frequencies makes the audio sound as if it is coming through a telephone while cutting all the treble frequencies makes it sound as if the audio is being heard through a wall.

[7] The left-right positioning of the audio in the stereo field.

music at the Junior Department of a London conservatoire to a freer approach to music-making while studying for a non-music related degree at University. The fact that the majority of my most recent musical education had taken place outside of music institutions and without formal training chimed well with the largely 'liberal', 'diverse' and 'inclusive' approaches to music-making that I encountered both within Nonclassical and amongst those who collaborated with it. This afforded me another role within the process of research in which interlocutors considered me as part of a movement against the formalisation of music to which they also subscribed.

(iv)   Audience member

At the same time as inhabiting all of the roles noted previously I was also fundamentally an audience member of Nonclassical. I first came to learn about the label through purchasing some of their albums and attending one of the club nights in early 2010. In fact, the first album of theirs that I owned was *Cortical Songs* (2009) which has since become a focus of my project. Thus my first interaction with this album was as a member of the CD-buying public. Moreover, I was not just an audience member in the sense of buying Nonclassical CDs, but also because the musical circles in which Nonclassical operates are intertwined with my own interests and career aspirations as a composer. This parallel was particularly exemplified by the relationship between Trinity Music College and Nonclassical: the former having recorded an album for the label, trained many of the ensembles later featured on the label and provided a judge for Nonclassical's annual 'battle of the bands' competition. Since I currently have a place at Trinity on the MMus Composition course 2011/12, I was acutely aware that there was a lack of definitive split between field and home in this instance since my research site and own interests and aspirations were heavily intertwined. These links afforded me a deeper understanding of the contemporary music scene in London and encouraged self-

reflexivity while researching. Yet at the same time they highlighted the problems associated with managing relationships during the ethnographic process, especially those that I would go on to rely on in my future study at Trinity and aspiring career as a composer.

Thus the nature of my role throughout the research process was both shifting and polysemic: some aspects of which helped me to integrate within the group while others kept me at a distance. Drawing on Porcello (1998: 489-90) I would suggest that the process of carrying out ethnography has many similarities to the experience of playing in a musical ensemble since both rely on matters of interaction, communication and practice and equally require knowledge of technical codes, performance practice and codes of social interaction. Just as members of an ensemble work to improve their musical interactions over time, my experiences at Nonclassical involved constant reflection and re-consideration of relationships. This process was carried out both in public settings and also in moments of introspection, especially when reading field notes and trying to decipher why a particular day had felt so unsuccessful. As Porcello (1998: 490) puts it, I was encouraged "to replay the tape of the gig and decipher which conditions are being violated and preventing the successful establishment of the groove".

Here again, fruitful parallels can be drawn between the processes of ethnography and the act of remixing, considering my experiences as a researcher as a dramatic illustration of the production processes I witnessed at Nonclassical. Just as undesirable elements of a remix were backgrounded by cutting the EQ frequencies, burying it in reverb or dropping its volume, I learnt to de-emphasise certain aspects of my role in particular circumstances. Moreover, while favoured elements in a track were foregrounded through centering in the stereo field, boosting frequencies or double-tracking, I learnt when to

turn up the volume on certain aspects of my position in order to benefit research. Equally, in recognising my own position of shifting identities throughout the ethnographic process, I was more attuned to the uncertainties and tensions between those involved in the remix project. Just as I embodied a variety of roles during the research process, each with different connotations and requirements, so the various remixers who worked with Nonclassical managed a series of complex creative relationships between themselves, the record label and the original artists. Both a consideration of my own role within Nonclassical and an understanding of my implication within this community brought into sharper the focus the status of remixing as a site of tensions and conflicts.

Constructing the Text

Of course ethnography refers not just to the process of research but also to the written account of experience itself. Thus, the methods used to 'text' my experiences at Nonclassical are another important point to consider. Influences from post-colonial theory and literary criticism have lead to a crisis of representation in writing which in turn has questioned the status of the ethnographic text. As such, since the 1980s there has been much debate over ways of representing ethnographic experience, largely focusing on recognition of the ethnographic account as inherently partial and indebted to fiction (see Barz, 1997; Clifford, 1987; Clifford & Marcus, 1987; Crapanzano, 1992; Kisliuk, 1997). Contemporary anthropological discourse has largely accepted the concept of ethnography as a fictionalised account and as such, a variety of more artistic approaches to ethnography have developed which include examples of ethnography as poetry, as film or as a set of images (see Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

I recognise ethnography as a form of mediation between reader and event that can be creatively manipulated in order to sharpen the focus of an account. In her ethnography of a recording studio in South Africa, Meintjes (2003) draws on aspects of studio practice for the organization of her book, using concepts such as 'cuts', and 'tracks' to order her material. This practice allows the author to play with notions of narrative and fiction and extend the idea of art as a form of production into ethnographic domains. Drawing on this method, I have organised my account around the movement of audio material through the Nonclassical remix process. My account thus charts the progression of the remix from a series of sound samples to a final finished piece that then becomes absorbed in processes of feedback and quality control mediated by Nonclassical and finally reaches the market as a completed commodity. As such my written account is organised around the various mediations of the remix moving from technologies and techniques of remix production to the musical mediations of the finished work then to the social mediations of relations with Nonclassical and finally to the commercial mediations of the remix as a commodity product.

My account does not just reflect the processual movement of the remix but also embodies the very notion of a remix object. That is, the creative process described by the remixers I spoke to had many similarities with my own process of writing. As the remixers began by preparing their sonic 'tools' – collecting a bank of sounds that they would then go on to use – I began by selecting or rejecting particular themes or issues that would later be thematised in my account. Equally, while the remixers would creatively manipulate this extracted material, often transporting it to new and distinct stylistic realms that bore no relation to the original piece, my narrative was constructed in a physically and temporally displaced location from where my original material was collected. This process of movement between field site and writing location was creative

such that my ethnographic account became more a narrative expression of my experiences at Nonclassical than an objective account. Moreover, while remixers tended to absorb the extracted audio material into their own stylistic and generic backgrounds, creating a piece that was substantially influenced by their own musical histories, my ethnographic account is necessarily bound by my own conventions of writing and thought.

There are a number of benefits in drawing links between the ethnographic text and the remix object in this way. Organising my account around the processual movement of the remix narrativises the process of collaborative music production within a small-scale capitalist enterprise, highlighting the re-negotiations of meaning that occur as the remix moves between actors. This places the dynamics of creative expression in dialogue with those of institutionalisation and capitalist production (Meintjes, 2003: 16), which allows me to thematise and thus question the ways in which musical creativity has been constructed within the commercial setting of Nonclassical. Moreover, by considering my ethnography as a form of remix itself, I recognise that my account presents one creative version of my time at Nonclassical of which there could be an infinite number. Conceiving of my account in this way not only recognises the fictionalisation inherent in the ethnographic text but also acknowledges the creativity of the remix process in which material is not just re-ordered but creatively manipulated and managed by actors with particular musical and biographical histories that they bring to bear on their work.

However I did encounter difficulties in constructing my dissertation in this way. The task of producing a text that is both creative and scholarly, reflexive and with broader relevance is one that I found particularly challenging. At times I found my writing veering towards objectivism, presenting a series of empirical observations and a 'view

from nowhere' account. I tried to counter-balance this by building my account around quotes or references to conservations (both transcribed and remembered) with members of the Nonclassical community. Through this process I attempted to foreground the derivative nature of my dissertation – piecing together an account based on 'samples' from a variety of contributors – while at the same time incorporating a variety of voices so that my own did not come to dominate my dissertation. In this way, just as remixes always bear some relation to their original source, my account relies heavily on the creative material from which it derives. In remixes this similarity may be subtle – recognising a kick drum as a pizzicato cello from the original track or linking a trance pad to an earlier string ensemble chord – but it clearly ties the remix to its original source and in doing so elicits a new level of listening to the original material. Similarly, my account draws heavily on the material from which it is derived, presenting snapshots of dialogue in order to effect the same subtle moment of recognition that is evident when listening to a remix track.

Conclusion

To conclude, my dissertation draws on the methods of multi-sited ethnography to construct a field site that is distanciated and united by a "follow the thing" chain of inquiry which follows the movement of audio files between members of the community. Here the methods of virtual ethnography are particularly useful as they allow me to chart the movement of music into distant locations. Such processes mean that my position within the Nonclassical community was shifting and under re-negotiation as I moved between different virtual and experienced, online and offline contexts. Moreover, drawing on notions of ethnography as fiction, I constructed my dissertation in line with both the processual movement of remixing and the nature of the remix object itself.

By drawing links between ethnography and the remix, my account narrativises the processes of music-making that I encountered in Nonclassical as well as highlighting the inherent creativity in (and many similarities between) the process of creating a remix and writing an ethnographic account. The challenges of ethnography as both a process and a text have been widely discussed in recent years and are a now well-known aspect of anthropological discourse. Drawing links between ethnography and the remix could help transfer aspects of this scholarship to the domain of musical creativity and shed light on the tensions and difficulties inherent in the process of 're-versioning' a piece of music written by someone else.

References

Appadurai, A. ed. (1986) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barz, G. F. (1997) 'Confronting the Field(note) in and out of the Field' in G. F. Barz & T. J. Cooley eds. *Shadows in the Field: New perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 45-62.

Barz, G. F. & T. J. Cooley (1997) 'Casting Shadows in the Field: An Introduction' in G. F. Barz & T. J. Cooley eds. *Shadows in the Field: New perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 3-21.

Baym, N. (2000) *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, Fandom and Online Community*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Beaudry, N. (1997) 'The Challenges of Human Relations in Ethnographic Inquiry: Examples from Artic and Subartic Fieldwork' in G. F. Barz & T. J. Cooley eds. *Shadows in the Field: New perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 63-85.

Born, G. (1995) *Rationalizing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods 4th Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clifford, J. (1987) 'Introduction: Partial Truths' in J. Clifford & G. E. Marcus eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press. pp. 1-26.

Clifford, J. & G. E. Marcus (1987) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Constable, N. (2003) *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography and 'Mail Order' Marriages*. Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press.

Cornell, S. (1995) 'An Ethnography of an Electronic Bar: The Lesbian Café' in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 24 (3): pp. 270-98*.

Crapanzano, V. (1992) *Hermes' Dilemma and Hamlet's Desire: On the Epistemology of Interpretation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press.

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. eds. (1996) *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*. Ethnographic Alternatives Book Series, Vol. 1. Walnut Creek, CA.: AltaMira Press.

Escobar, A. (1993) 'Welcome to Cyberia: Notes on the Anthropology of Cyberculture' in *Current Anthropology, 35 (3): pp.211-31*.

Fahin, H. ed. (1982) *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries*. Durham, NC: Carolina Acad Press.

Fox, A. A. (2005) *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Feld, S. (1994) 'From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of 'World Music and 'World Beat'' in C. Keil & S. Feld eds. *Music Grooves*. Chicago: Chicago Press. pp. 257-89.

Guilbault, J. & L. Grenier (1990) '"Authority" Revisited: The 'Other' in Anthropology and Popular Music Studies' in *Ethnomusicology, 32 (2): pp. 381-397*.

Gupta, A. & J. Ferguson (1997) 'Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method and Location in Anthropology' in A. Gupta & J. Ferguson eds. *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of Field Science*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Hine, C. (2008) 'Virtual Ethnography: Modes, Varieties, Affordances' in F. Nigel, M. L. Raymond & B. Grant eds. *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods*. London: Sage Publications. pp. 257-268.

Jackson, A. ed. (1987) *Anthropology at Home*. London: Tavistock

James, N. & H. Busher (2006) 'Credibility, Authenticity and voice: Dilemmas in Online Interviewing' in *Qualitative Research, 6 (3): pp. 403-20.*

Kisliuk, M. (1997) '(Un) Doing Fieldwork: Sharing Songs, Sharing Lives' in G. F. Barz & T. J. Cooley eds. *Shadows in the Field: New perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology.* New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 23-44.

La Rue, H. (2000) 'The Ethnomusicologist in the Wilderness' in P. Dresch, W. James & D. Parkin eds. *Anthropologists In a Wider World.* New York: Bergahn Books. Pp. 205-228.

Marcus, G. E. (1995) 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography' in *Annual Review of Anthropology, 24: pp. 95-117.*

Marcus, G. E. (1998) *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marcus, G. E. & F. R. Myers (1996) 'The Traffic in Art and Culture: An Introduction' in G. E. Marcus & F. R. Myers eds. *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology.* Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 1-53.

Meintjes, L. (2003) *Sound of Africa! Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio.* Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Messerschmidt, D. A. ed. (1981) *Anthroplogists at Home in North America. Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mintz, S. (1985) *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History.* New York: Viking.

Narayan, K. (1993) '"How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?' in *American Anthropologist, 95 (3): pp. 671-686.*

Peirano, M. G. S. (1998) 'When Anthropology is at Home: The Different Contexts of a Single Discipline' in *Annual Review of Anthropology, 27: pp. 105-128.*

Porcello, T. (1998) '"Tails out": Social Phenomenology and the Ethnographic Representation of Technology in Music-Making' in *Ethnomusicology, 42 (3): pp. 485-510.*

Radway, J. (1988) 'Reception Study: Ethnography and the Problems of Dispersed Audiences and Nomadic Subjects' in *Cultural Studies, 2 (3): pp. 359-76.*

Reid, E. (1994) *Cultural Formations in Text-Based Virtual Realities*, MA Thesis. Accessed via www.aluluei.com/cult-form.htm

Rouse, R. (1991) 'Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernity' in *Diaspora, 1 (1): pp.8-23.*

Ruhleder, K. (2000) 'The Virtual Ethnographer: Fieldwork in Distributed Electronic Environments' in *Field methods, 12 (1): pp. 3-17.*

Sade-Beck, L. (2004) 'Internet ethnography: Online and Offline' in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3 (2) Article 4.* Retrieved 12 June 2011 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_2/ pdf/sadebeck.pdf

Savigliano, M. E. (1995) *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion.* Boulder, CO.: Westview.

Schneider, D. (1968) *American Kinship: A Cultural Account.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall.

Stokes, M. (2003) 'Talk and Text: Popular Music and Ethnomusicology' in A. F. Moore (Ed.) *Analysing Popular Music.* New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 218-239.

Wallerstein, I. (1991) *Report on an Intellectual Project: The Fernand Braudel Center 1976-1991.* Binghamton, NY.: Fernand Braudel Centre.

Wills, P. & Trondman, M. (2000) 'Manifesto for Ethnography' in *Ethnography, 1 (5): pp. 5-16.*