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AAS 307

SECTION ONE

Person interviewed:

Margarethe (Maggie) Adams

Interviewee's title or position:

Margarethe holds many titles in obtaining a B.A. in Russian and Soviet Area Studies and both a M.M. and Ph.D. in Musicology. She also holds a position as a professor of music and an assistant professor of Ethnomusicology at Stony Brook University. On top of being an expert and pioneer in her field, Maggie is also a wife, a mother and a provider for her family.

Date:

Wednesday Nov 11th, 2015

Time, and length of interview:

1:08:32 Via Audio Recording

Your objective in conducting this interview:

The initial focus of the interview was to address and develop a vivid analysis of ethnomusicology, but further developments in the interview led us to poke at the role of women in ethnomusicology, the countries that Maggie visited, the role of women in said countries, and what exactly it was that got her interested in her field of work.

SECTION TWO

With a little direction from Professor Christoff we found Margarethe Adams on the Stony Brook University department of music page and began to putting together a little bit about her career and prior education. We decided to centralize our focus of the interview on Ethnomusicology. However, prior to the interview we could only manage to grasp a vague interpretation of what Ethnomusicology was. Thankfully, Naveed and Brian had already taken a class with Professor Adams and that allowed us to really have our first foot in the door, on a personal level. What

really helped us structuralize our interview was when Naveed and Brian both expressed how easy it was to talk to Maggie and how passionate she was about what she taught in class. We decided as a group beforehand to use Maggie's strengths and passions to guide us through the interview. With a malleable backbone, our interview was led in directions and to topics we never would have expected to cover if we had sought otherwise. We learned that sometimes, the best journey is one that is most unexpected, making the end of the road that much sweeter.

We sent Maggie a couple of emails prior to the interview to clarify a couple of specific details.

We conversed about a few topic questions from which we created a sample outline of potential questions that are listed below:

-In our previous correspondence, you defined ethnomusicology as combining anthropology with music. Can you elaborate on that?

-Did you have any familial influences that affected your decision to pursue a career in ethnomusicology?

-Were there any obstacles you faced as a woman pursuing a career in ethnomusicology? How were your experiences different compared to male colleagues?

-What contributed to your decision to switch from Russian and Soviet Area studies to focusing on musicology for your Ph.D.?

-How would you describe the living conditions of the women living in the areas you have worked in?

-What aspects of a society's culture are reflected by its music? How do you feel this differs from country to country? Can you make any comparisons?

-According to your profile on the University's Department of Music page, your next project is a study of music and Islam in Central and Inner Asia. How is the project going? What are your findings so far?

-Do you have any words of advice for aspiring ethnomusicologists out there?

-What were some of your favorite countries to study and do work in?

SECTION 3

We got more than complete answers to our questions in our interview with Margarethe Adams. We were fortunate enough to be interviewing someone with her extensive experience because we were able to ask one question and be responded to with answers that were easily several minutes long at a time. Not only did she more than sufficiently answer the questions that we came into the interview with, but her responses would raise different issues and touch on things that we may not have even been aware of. This would lead to many spontaneous follow-up questions and requests for her to elaborate further on all the great points she was raising.

Even though our group had done our preliminary research on Margarethe and her work, we understood that a career as extensive and diverse as hers simply can not be summed up in the brief biographies and descriptions we were able to find online. Because of this, we chose to have our interview be a middle ground between being structured and unstructured. The preliminary research allowed us to form a list of questions that covered the main points we wanted to cover. However, we did not want to prepare all the questions beforehand and risk the interview being too structured. This would make us feel obligated to adhere to that structure and potentially miss out on things we may not have considered, as well as making the conversation feel monotonous and forced. Our decision ended up being for the best, as we maintained a basic structure while at the same time giving the interview some wiggle room to diverge and just let the conversation flow organically. Most of the information we got out of this interview ended up being the result of that. As the conversation started to come to a close, we had a question or two from our list that was unanswered. Margarethe had no problem backtracking for us and answering them, and this allowed her to give a more focused opinion and answer than when we just let the conversation go wherever. Having our interview be a mix of structured and unstructured was definitely the right decision.

In moments where we felt that we needed to steer the conversation in a slightly different direction, we used our probing questions. We started off the interview by asking "Could you

please describe what ethnomusicology means to you?” and Margarethe’s response to this served as the foundation for the rest of the interview. Later on in the interview when she spoke about her experiences working in different parts of the world, we found ourselves particularly interested in her work in Kazakhstan. We decided to ask her on the spot “Could you please elaborate on your experiences in Kazakhstan?” as that was one of the places she particularly focused on throughout her career. This question got her to tell us about the idea of Islam in Kazakhstan and how different people and cultures interpret the same religion differently. She went on to give examples of this in how Kazakh women would dress and how people would embark in pilgrimages. We certainly would not have gotten this thorough response from her if we worded our question in a different way, such as “Why did you focus so much on Kazakhstan?”. This certainly demonstrates the importance of probing questions that do not create an unintentionally biased response from the interviewee.

Daniel handled correspondence between Margarethe and us and arranged the interview with her by e-mail. All of us contributed to the pre-interview research and helped compile questions. During the actual interview, Susmita setup the audio recording on her laptop. After that, there was not necessarily a division of tasks. All of us were equally part of the conversation with Margarethe and passed around our list of questions. We all jotted our own notes throughout the interview whenever we saw fit. This meant that even when someone was writing, the rest of us were there to keep Margarethe engaged at all times through conversation, follow up questions, eye contact, and non-verbal gestures.

While Margarethe did not give us any particular references to articles or people to research, she did incorporate the experiences of other people in her answers to our questions. One particular instance of this was when we asked her about her experiences as a woman in the field of ethnomusicology and the challenges it presented to her. This brought up the issues of being a pregnant woman or a mother working in the field, as well as sexual harassment experienced by women in different countries. She would not only share with us her personal

experiences, but the experiences of her colleagues and friends and just what she has observed throughout her career. It is certainly understandable that she would not want to disclose names of any of her colleagues who experienced terrible forms of sexual harassment, for the sake of their privacy.

SECTION 4

Interview Notes:

- Ethnography: specific geographic focus; performance; primary mode of research
- Kazakhstan: many cultural clashes; political ideology & music
- Politics → music in public places → propaganda
 - Are the people of the country buying the propaganda?
- Role as woman
 - Gender big part of ethnography
 - Gender roles in society
- Marriage in 30s
- El Monty, Kazakhstan
- Political ideology through institutions
 - Familial connections
- Old model vs. new model of ethnomusicology
 - Research through literature vs research through socialization
- Traveling with kids
- Trip in China (middle of winter)
- Bus trip
- Some sexual harassment
 - Some women attacked
 - Kazak festival...incident with elderly gentleman
 - Married women seen as not available
 - No special treatment to them because of them being American
- Countries that end with “-stan” → Muslim stereotypes
- Reverse culture shock: very diverse communities exist there
 - Research question: how are women examining themselves after fall of the Soviet Union?
 - Idea of worship
 - Feeling of spirituality
 - Pilgrimage vs. going to mosque
 - Going to pilgrimage as tourists during Soviet era
 - Pilgrimage → what is it doing that social structure isn't doing?
 - Reasons...fertility, legal issues, etc
 - No major lifestyle change (go once and it's over)
 - Businesses revolved around practice (busses, travel, hotel)
- Being a “proper” Muslim
 - Wearing hijabs/religious articles of clothing
 - Those who are Muslim but do not wear hijabs: are we less Muslim?
- Music and belief?
 - Christian and Islam

- Understanding languages → opening doors
- “Christmas Cake” concept
 - After 25 years old, women seen as undesirable for marriage
- Favorite place → China
 - Year after Tiananmen Massacre
 - Xiendu (Southwest Province)
- Worship in performance
 - How you perform belief
- Political ideology
 - Public performance
- Television
 - Media, what kinds of media/music are being shown on TV
 - National holidays → folk music
 - Imported holidays (ex: New Years) → 70s/80s Russian music
- How is time reflected in performance?

SECTION 5

Throughout the interview, many emerging topics were raised and stayed relevant through the course of the conversation. The most overarching theme was the concept that being a woman had both its advantages and disadvantages in the field of ethnomusicology. While being a mother and a wife opened up many doors to environments that otherwise would not have been explored by a single counterpart (such as daycares, schools, etc), it also came with the issue of safety while traveling, traveling with young children, and the possibility of being sexually harassed. Another huge umbrella theme of the interview focused on the role of how the portrayal and type of music performed or utilized in public places was a reflection of political ideologies being imposed on the citizens. For example, national holidays specific to Kazakhstan would imply music on television to be geared towards traditional Kazakh folk music, while imported holidays (such as New Year’s Eve) entailed Russian music from the 1970s-80s. The fall of the Soviet Era played a huge factor in the shift Kazakhs have taken in learning where they belong in the spiritual and religious realms, as well as seeking a new-found identity for themselves that best express their views. The practice of pilgrimage, which was once perceived as touristic for Kazakhs, was now being observed as a sacred, religious journey, one which is symbolical of that of Kazakhs.

The amount of interpretations that could have been made from Ms. Adam's interview was limited as the accounts and stories that were told were very black-and-white and to the point. The only room for interpretation was left amongst ourselves after we walked out of Ms. Adams office and was given the chance to take in everything that was said, reflect on it, and sum up key points that Ms. Adams wanted us to walk away with. These key concepts include introspective views of what it meant to be a woman ethnographer, being a wife and mother on the job and having to encounter hardships of travel and being in an unfamiliar place. It also put into perspective how being a woman allowed for a different type of experience for an ethnographer compared to a male counterpart, as women had more familial connections in these societies through children and other children's parents.

Due to the amount and depth of content we were able to walk away with from this interview, our group did not feel that a follow-up interview would have been necessary with Ms. Adams. We did not expect to get the huge amount of material from her as we had originally anticipated, and there were many parts of the interview that were not needed for the purposes of our final project. However, the in depth explanations that we did not incorporate or emphasize greatly in our project definitely contributed to our understanding of the points made by Adams, and helped us better demonstrate the research and career paths taken by Adams and her reflections on her work. Our group was lucky in the way that we had prepared our interview questions to serve as a sort of "skeleton," which Adams was easily able to attach flesh and meat to because of her abundance of experiences and thoughts to share from. None of the questions that we had come to the interview with went unanswered, and we were able to receive a greater understanding of the type of society that exists in Kazakhstan, as well as other areas that Adams had done research in, bridging the gap of knowledge between what we had perceived these societies to be like and what they actually are.

While our approach to the interview with a "skeleton" question list, and actively asking questions based on her answers worked for us, it's important to note that this approach was a

tactical decision made by the group beforehand. Based on the research we had done, and the prior knowledge we had with Brian and Naveed taking a class with Professor Adams beforehand, we knew that Adams would be incredibly open and accommodating to most of our questions, and would enjoy questions that would naturally come up during the interview. However, some interviewees do not work well with such an approach. An interview that shows this is Nancy Payne's interview, conducted by: Junbum Hwang, Hosun Jung, and Kyuri Kim. In this interview, the students were interviewing the Vice President of PeaceTech Labs - a position that can be exposed to public scrutiny. Much like a politician, someone with this position in a company would be expected to have very thought out and concise answers, as their answers could affect the company. In their public speaking, they tend to be very careful about what they say, making sure that nothing they say can be either taken out of context, or simply taken the wrong way. The easiest way to see an example of this is through Twitter. Twitter is a social media platform designed to share your personal thoughts. However, there is a distinct difference between the twitter of a politician, and the twitter of one of my high school teachers, @MrReiff on Twitter. I specifically use this example because these two cases are very comparable. Mr. Reiff interacts with other Twitter accounts, having interesting discussions on education, specifically technology education. However, Mrs. Payne uses twitter simply as a platform to promote PeaceTech Labs: "Give the gift of a peace on #GivingTuesday! Help support the @PeaceTechLab <http://www.peacetechlab.org/support> " - @NSPayne. This analysis of Twitter profiles can tell us a lot about a person, and how they would respond to interview questions. Unfortunately, Professor Adams did not have a Twitter. Payne seemed to answer the interview questions in a way that is reminiscent of a politician's answers. She would not necessarily dodge questions that asked for a strong opinion, but she would essentially give a non-answer for some of the questions that could have portrayed her in a bad light. With that being said, the interview was still very interesting as she had a lot to say about her company, and the great work it does. I believe that if we had a subject like this, our interview would not have been as

successful with our “skeleton” question list approach. This interview taught us that it is incredibly important to understand your subject prior to interviewing, as it’s critical to create a successful question list and interview approach. However, good planning and prior knowledge of our subject indicated to us that our interview would be successful with our approach.