

Call for contributions to a special number

‘Imagining the “musical memorial” Music and (re)transmission of memories of slave trades and slaveries’

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Esclavages & post~esclavages/Slaveries & Post~Slaveries

Elina DJEBBARI, lecturer at Paris Nanterre University

Charlotte GRABLI, postdoctoral Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at History Department, UCLA and CIRESC-CNRS

Deadline for the submission of summaries: October 31, 2021

Deadline for the submission of articles: March 1st, 2022

The aim of this special issue is to pursue the reflection initiated by the journal *Esclavages & post~esclavages/Slaveries & Post~Slaveries* on the work of artists and their re-actualization through sensitive forms of the history and memories of the slave trades and slaveries, this time with a focus on the question of music. This dossier will attempt to unfold the complex ways in which music has become a source and a resource for memories, from the time of the slave trades and slaveries to the present day.

As many scholarly works have shown, music and dance, among others, are capable of conveying and embodying memorial forms and becoming living archives reactualized through performance or listening (see for instance, Aterianus-Owanga & Santiago 2016; Taylor 2003). Since the western abolitions, in the Black Atlantic (Paul Gilroy), but also in post-slavery societies in the Indian Ocean (Desroches & Samson 2008), the Maghreb, and the Persian Gulf, music continues to be invoked to confront the “ghostly legacy of slavery” (Rice and Kardux 2012). In the Maghreb and Arabic Peninsula, communities link their musical practices to the past of slavery, in explicit (see Becker 2020 on the Gnawas in Morocco) or more ambiguous ways (see Jankowsky 2006 on the Stambali rites in Tunisia). In the United States, the African American author Toni Morrison has specifically thought of jazz, blues, and spirituals as essential “musical memorials” to the construction of a literary space of recollection, when a “proper memorial” did not exist yet (World magazine 1989).

In questioning the memory of slaveries and slave trades through music, this special issue proposes to move away from traditional memorials, already widely studied, to grasp the diversity of “musical memorials” that have been embodied, imagined and explored through performative and literary practices in post-slavery societies.

Countless musical styles, dances, carnivals, and other performative practices involving music such as religious processions in South America and carnivals in Africa and the Caribbean, have become “musical memorials” in contexts marked by the absence or failure of institutional projects of memorialization. In Benin, musicians and dancers have, for instance, invested salsa as a space for Afro-Atlantic memory (Kabir 2018) on the margins of the Slave Route project launched by UNESCO in the early 1990s.

In recent times, music plays a central role in artists’ responses to the silences that persist within institutions and family spheres. By teaching Guadeloupean artist Jay Ramier to be more attentive to the claims conveyed by other musics, hip-hop has, for instance, been crucial in the development of his career (2021). His search for photographs of the zouks of the 1970s, those evenings where parents and students from the Caribbean diaspora gathered, played music and danced in Paris, further testifies to the centrality of music in his “genealogical journey.” In the context of the emergence of the issues around reparations and the struggle against contemporary discriminations and servitudes, the use of archives carrying dissident memories in different artistic forms constitute therefore a privileged line of enquiry.

By questioning the constituting processes of the “musical memorial” in spaces marked by different systems of slave trades and slaveries in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, in Africa and in the Persian Gulf, this special issue also intends to focus on the porosity of musical practices as well as on the potential conflicts linked to memory. In post-slavery societies, “musical memorials” can indeed mix references to slave trades and slaveries with those of other forms of domination and forced displacement such as indentured labor, sometimes revealing dynamics of memorial competition (Desroches & Samson 2008). Some conflicts may also appear at the national level, such as in eastern Arabia where the memory policies of nation-states tend to dissociate the rites of possession *leiwah* from the slave descendants from the East African coasts who created them (Sebiane 2015). The specificity of the material forming the “musical memorial,” both composite and potentially disputed, invites us to think about the associations and dissociations between “legitimate” depositaries, practitioners and receivers, at different scales and within different cultural, artistic and media channels.

This thematic issue of the journal *Esclavages & post~esclavages/Slaveries & Post~Slaveries* invites researchers from all human and social sciences to reflect on the links between memory and music to question ways of dispute, recollection, transmission, or artistic research aimed at reconstructing long-forgotten genealogies or imagining them at different times, in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, in Africa and in the Persian Gulf.

Contributions may address the following themes (but are not limited to):

- the entangled processes of (re)actualization, performance and (re)transmission in the conceptions of the “musical memorial” in a given historical context, from the abolitions to the present day;

- the performativity of these memory processes at individual and collective scales, and their affective and emotional implications;
- the relationship between the “musical memorial” and the silence of institutions or, on the contrary, the proliferation of (inter)national initiatives dedicated to the history of the slave trades and slaveries;
- the works, practices and imaginations of artists who, over the centuries, have helped shape and pass on the links between music and memory;
- the role of new technologies such as records, which appeared at the turn of the 20th century, and later of digital and internet formats, in these processes;
- the processes of intermediality and intertextuality at the heart of the constitution of musical memorials;
- alternative memory processes and manifestations of dialogues and conflicts between different types of actors around the “musical memorial.”

Guidelines for submissions

Short summaries of proposed articles (500-800 words) must be sent by **October 31, 2021** to slaveries-musiques@groupe.renater.fr. The articles themselves (45,000 characters maximum, inclusive of spaces and bibliography), which may be written in French, English, Spanish or Portuguese, must be submitted by **March 1st, 2022**. They should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 3,600 characters. Comprehensive guidance for authors is accessible [here](#).

The editorial committee will announce its decisions on April 4, 2022. The selected articles will be published in the journal *Esclavages & post~esclavages/Slaveries & Post~Slaveries* in November 2022.

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