CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Music in the moment, or one day in Buklavu
Authors	Stock, Jonathan P. J.;Chiener, Chou
Publication date	2021-04-20
Original Citation	Stock, J. P. J. and Chiener, C. (2021) 'Music in the moment, or one day in Buklavu', in Stock, J. P. J. and Chiener, C., Everyday Musical Life among the Indigenous Bunun, Taiwan. New York: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781003159865-4
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003159865 - 10.4324/9781003159865-4
Rights	© 2021, the Authors. All rights reserved. This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Stock, J. P. J. and Chiener, C., Everyday Musical Life among the Indigenous Bunun, Taiwan on 20 April 2021, available online: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003159865-4
Download date	2026-10-31 15:14:39
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/13870



University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Chapter 3: Music in the Moment, Or One Day in Buklavu

> In the dimension of time, music modifies our consciousness of being…. It is an architecture in time. It gives time a density different from its everyday density. It lends it a materiality it does not ordinarily have and that is of another order. It indicates that something is happening in the here and now; that time is being occupied by an action being performed, or that a certain state rules over the beings present.
> Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (1985:121)

Morning

It is around 5.45 a.m. and the chickens are up.[1] Oddly perhaps, given that their destiny is to be eaten, they're advertising their presence. They do this with flamboyant squawks and calls—I imagine strutting too, elbows projected confidently to each side at just the right angle to look superb while permitting the warming air to gently caress the underfeathers. Riffing to the sun as it inches over the valley's eastern farmlands, this first element of the Buklavu soundscape is all about emphatic display: hear me, see me, be awed, the cockerels proclaim. That might be the best approach to life, in the circumstances.

Dogs are the next to contribute. But their howls are in tandem with an extended burst of phlegmatic static from the village loudspeaker system, which clears its throat like a chain smoker who's just gotten up. After an ascending arpeggio (one octave, major) on pre-

[1] Kofi Agawu begins his study of Northern Ewe rhythms with an account of 24 hours in the rural soundscapes of southern Ghana (1995:8-30). Agawu notes (*ibid*.:198) this same presentational approach in Steven Feld's CD *Voices of the Rainforest* (1991), where, of course, the account is constructed from recorded sound. Like these examples, this 24-hour period is a composite of data drawn from different days in the field research, and I omit the usual dating of personal communications or other conventions that would break the sense of a single day
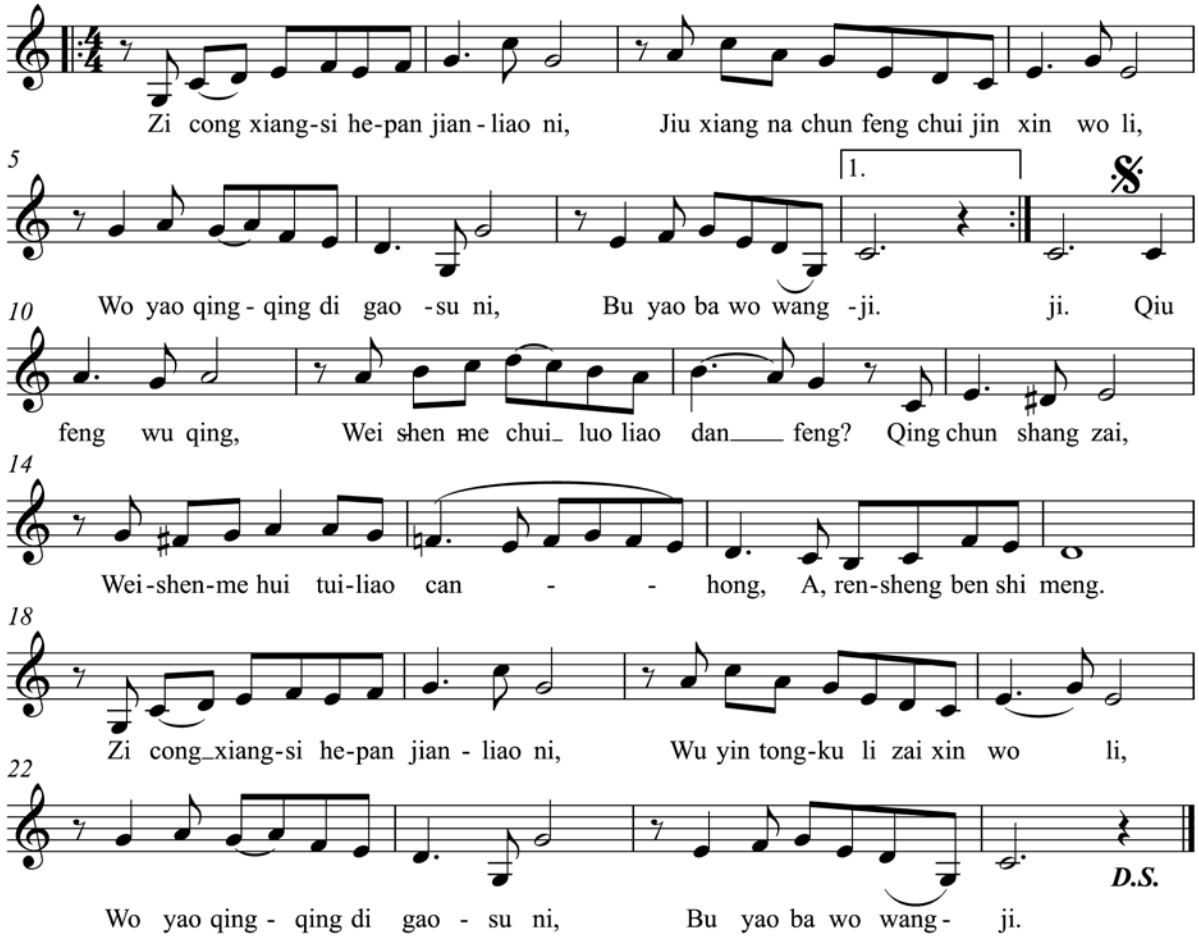
recorded chimes, the village chief makes some announcements. A descending arpeggio closes the announcement. I can't make out a word of it, through the distortion and the dogs' collective baying. The different speakers around the village are off key with one another. At first, I assume this means all kinds of clashing higher partials that make this an especially unpleasant aural experience for the local dogs, but a glance at Duman in the yard outside, or at Boji next door, doesn't support a fight-or-flight interpretation. On the contrary, the body language is positive, hyper-attentive, participatory. People in Buklavu don't pay much attention to the static or other sonic qualities of the announcements, although they confirm that they can make out the words. They seem indifferent to the dogs' enthusiastic joining in: that's just the kind of thing that might be picked up on by a Westerner with overly anthropomorphic notions of pets as family members, suggests neighbor Qiu Guichun with a smile, as he heads off to tend his fruit trees.

And so the stuttering start, crescendo, reverb, and fade of motorbikes; the chopping, popping, and pouring of food preparation; the splashes and flushes of showering and other, baser ablutions; the rhythmic call-and-response of family greetings; energetic fanfare-based proclamations punctuating the drone of TV news. An open-back sales van approaches, "Yearning for the Riverbank" (*Xiangsi hepan*) playing (Figs. 3.1, 3.2). This is a light romantic song with a nostalgic tone, one widely used in karaoke, and sung in various Chinese-language versions since the 1960s.[2] But here it's telling us that roast duck and roast chicken would make a fine breakfast. Or, rather, the sonic appeal of the familiar melody is drawing our eyes to the van itself, where the specificities of what's on offer are made amply

[2] "Yearning for the Riverbank" apparently began as a Thai folksong: http://baike.baidu.com/view/1596700.htm; accessed 14 December 2013. The transcription shown in Fig. 3.1 is from http://myscore.org/5056.htm; accessed 27 February 2014. Sites like this make vast amounts of repertory available to internet users even in apparently remote locations like Buklavu.

clear. Admittedly, ducks might very happily inhabit a riverbank, so there could be a tiny hint there as to the free-range provenance of the butcher's birds. But chickens aren't associated with watercourses, and the song lyrics themselves lack reference to any kind of fowl presence, so I suspect choice of this soundtrack isn't intended to directly conjure up a farmyard setting for listeners. Much more important is that the song specifically selected does more than just catch eyes by pulling ears. Its swaying refrain "I want to tell you softly, don't forget me" (Wo yao qingqingdi gaosu ni, bu yao ba wo wangji; measures 5-8 in Fig. 3.1) hooks into the listener's mind, overlaying the warmth of love long lost with that of ready-to-eat pullet: it's just like the roast your granny used to make. Of course, most in Buklavu are hearing this mobile sales pitch for the umpteenth time, so they know what's on sale without having to go look. And although familiarity may mean the van's theme song is more heard than attentively listened to, its aural evocation of feelings is intrusive, so much harder to ignore than the visual. Poultry in (e)motion.

“Yearning for the Riverbank”



Note: the score presents parallel staff and cipher notations, and then the lyrics in Chinese. In cipher notation, 1 represents do, 2 is re, 3 is mi, etc., with symbols adopted from staff notation to show further details. Text at the top right attributes this version to a rendition by singer Tsai Chin (b. 1957).

Summary translation: A couple met in Spring by the riverbank, but Autumn comes and youth fades. Why is life only a dream? I have pain in my heart. Forget me not.

Figure 3.1: Transcription of “Yearning for the Riverbank”



Figure 3.2: Roving sales van playing back a theme song to alert potential customers

But there's no chicken for us this day. Tama Umas needs some supplies and suggests a drive into the nearby town of Luye, and so he, Cina Savi, daughter Ibu, Chiener, and myself climb into the car. There's a moment of prayer for safety on the road ahead—mumbled, solo intoning rounded off by a more emphatic, group cadence—another form of sonic performance characteristic of life in the village for many families. And then we're off. Reversing onto the roadway, Tama Umas turns on the car's CD-player, and we're propelled at once to a point midway through an a cappella choral rendition of "Amazing Grace". There's an element of indeterminacy in operating the CD-player, since three members of the same family share the same car and each drives regularly and inserts their own preferred discs into the CD-drive. Ibu has expressed incredulity at her father's listening tastes on previous occasions: this situation can lead to discussions on musical taste divergences

expressed not only with passion but as if the musical choices revealed by the CD in question reveal guiltily hidden moral or educational shortcomings on the part of whoever put that recording into the player. At other times, conversation is temporarily eschewed as one or more passengers sing along with the music. But not today: Ibu seems happy enough with the selection, and we're soon chatting over the top of the choir, reducing it to an atmospheric tempering alongside the sounds of the engine, the wind, and the car's tires on the road surface.

While we're eating breakfast, Ibu's cell phone rings. Or rather, it starts to play one of her brother's songs. Ringtones are very cheap, she explains a little later. You can sometimes get them for free as a promotion for the song itself, and she's sometimes set her phone to play one or another of her brother's new songs, to help him advertise those. But she hasn't gone all the way of using different ones for every known caller, just a few for particular friends and family. In many situations, it is useful to know who is calling before answering, but allocating specific music tracks like this, rather than setting one (or more) blander ringing sounds, allows the receiver to pre-tune the potentially interrupting sound to express the qualities of the immediate relationship now reactivated by the call. The results of such choices, of course, are heard by everyone within earshot of the receiver, rather than by the caller, so selections are made with at least some thought toward their capacity for aesthetic projection toward a wider listenership.

Then it's back into the car to return to Buklavu. Prayers are said once again, and we're underway. Tama Umas presses the next CD button, and a disc of Taiwanese oldies starts to play. It's a genre of romantic songs that goes back to the 1930s, and this is a classic selections compilation with well-known examples like Deng Yuxian's "Rainy Night Flower" (*U ia hue*). I think the singer is Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun), although I don't think to confirm that at the time. It's certainly a 1980s recording in musical idiom rather than a 1930s track. The song

is in slow waltz tempo and mostly syllabic. Its three verses tell of a frail flower blown to the ground where it can only wither and die unobserved, a metaphor for a country girl drawn to the big city by her lover but then unceremoniously cast off. One might listen to such repertory for nostalgia-infused pleasure, but it's more likely that one of the family added the disc to sing along with while driving and so memorize the song for use in karaoke. Although I barely hear Taiwanese spoken in Buklavu during my visits there, I regularly hear it in social singing contexts.

Back home, the purchases are swiftly sorted out. Tama Umas turns on the TV: there's a new episode of a Chinese series with a Song Dynasty setting that he wants to watch. Cina Savi and Ibu mutter darkly together about men just liking to watch fighting, but he's not deterred, and the theme tune is soon resounding throughout the house. Watching a TV series can be a highly musical experience. The opening and closing theme songs are designed to be heard scores of times, of course, with many such series in East Asia extending over forty or more episodes. Some of the best of these theme songs become hits in their own right. Then there is incidental music within the drama itself; performances of song, dance, or instrumental music "onstage" within the episode itself; and shorter passages bookmarking commercial breaks. And, when pre-existing material is used, when a singer is recognizable, or when the music evokes comparison, tendrils thrust out from the TV series deep into the listener's wider subjectivity.[3] But on this occasion Chiener and I don't linger, whether to enjoy the battle scenes or to experience "distributed subjectivity" with others sympathetic to

[3] In an example of how *not* to do good fieldwork, I leave without writing down exactly which series it was that had caught Tama Umas's interest. When I think to follow up on this on my next visit, Tama Umas is no longer sure which it was; several such were broadcast annually in Taiwan throughout the mid 2000s, so combing old TV schedules doesn't provide a definitive answer.

the plight of the Southern Song.[4] It is nearly 10.00 a.m. and we need to go to the Buklavu Junior School. The school choir is rehearsing and we're welcome to come along to hear them in action. Bunun-language song tutor Hu Jinniang (Fig. 2.1, in the preceding chapter) has been brought in to help with lyrics, meaning, and contextual learning, and she adds both expertise and gravitas to the occasion.

When we arrive, we find Hu and school music teacher Lin Suhui taking forty or so school children of ages 8-12 through a series of Bunun song arrangements. Among them is the *malastapang*, which we met first in Chapter 1 (Fig. 3.3). Its basic format comprises rapid-fire, four-syllable lines in which a succession of soloists recount their bravery and hunting achievements. Each soloist introduces and rounds off his panegyric by uttering three cries, the first elongated, "Hu— ho ho", and every line, including the cries, is immediately echoed by all but the soloist. The boys-as-hunters squat in a semi-circle, with a second row formed by their classmates-as-wives ranged behind them. A pupil in the role of village chief (*tomuk*, a role introduced by the Japanese; Yang 2011:326-7) approaches each hunter in turn, inviting him to introduce his exploits and then drain a ladle of wine as a toast to all (for now, they mime the drinking).

[4] An English-language report on the school choir which includes short passages of singing and interviews is at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etMO4POSdAo, accessed 6 February 2014.



Figure 3.3 Members of the Buklavu Primary School Choir rehearsing the *malastapang* hunting chant

The lyrics of a *malastapang* rendition are not so much sung as chanted loud and strong, almost at a shout, such that the powerful "Hu—ho ho" motif punctuates the otherwise dominant, driving quadruplets not in resonance but rhythmically and in contour: the song's lyrics are mostly level in tone, whereas these cries have a distinct fall from high to mid register. There are body movements too. Each soloist stands to make his introduction. The hunters fist-pump the air above them to mark each line (some performances involve miming the hunt itself), whether as soloist or choral respondent, while the back-row participants have the job of jumping on the spot, turning their bodies 90 degrees right and then 90 degrees left

in coordination with the start of each solo and chorus song line. They clap as they land on the first syllable, offering a flowing curtsey-like arm movement at the mid-point of each line.[5]

Although Ms Lin's choir isn't given wine, some water is sent for when it's discovered that their miming isn't up to scratch. In another departure from tradition, their lines are written for them rather than autobiographical, but that's reasonable given that none was of an age to have accrued significant hunting prowess (even if so doing was legal) and also the endangered state of their mother tongue. In interview, Lin mentions that there's a second kind of *malastapang*, used at weddings, which she took as her model. In that kind, those present used this format to introduce their lineage, even as they confirmed their mutual interconnectedness by sharing wine. Lin says she thinks this usage helped people check that they weren't accidentally marrying a long-lost cousin too.

Rehearsing the chant builds toward the choir's participation in future public song contests, such that the competitive potential of the song takes new shape in the modern state. But the music making today isn't entirely future-oriented: if Ms Lin's aim is on the next contest, Hu Jinniang is more concerned with the transmission of traditional culture and values, and so looking back as well as forward. She badgers the young singers—you aren't strong enough. It sounds too "nice", like a performance, she says. You've got to make it feel real, not staged. Meanwhile, the song evidently affords opportunities for subversive humor in the here-and-now. Boys make high-spirited horseplay with the imaginary wine, and one of them mispronounces a line so that it sounds like a particularly ubiquitous Taiwanese curse. It's close enough for a good number of the choir to stop to laugh, much to their teachers'

[5] On another occasion, an elderly villager tells us that in the mountains in the past no one wore any underwear. Boys and younger men paid very close attention to the *malastapang*, she said, but not to hear the hunters' exploits so much as because when the dance movements became vigorous they had a chance of catching a fleeting glimpse of the women's bodies as their robes rose and fell with each leap.

dismay, and the children are enjoined to start over again and again until they can do it without overt juvenile smirking. Such moments of silliness aside, Lin says, there's been good public impact since she started teaching the *malastapang* at school. Pupils have been asking their grandparents about how to do it, and are pushing them to perform their own versions at festivals, she states. The latter very much appreciate the interest.

Then, the school chimes play, a musical signal (audible over the whole of Buklavu) that softens and aestheticizes the marking out of distinct temporal periods, and it is off to other classes for the choir members as the university students head away to their bus, some distinctly pleased at how well their own performance went. These electronic chimes, incidentally, are primarily based on bell-like broken chords, and so simultaneously call out to the presence of Western Christianity, the period of Japanese colonialism (during which schools were established and chimes widely adopted as a periodic signal within them), and, in a happy coincidence, traditional Bunun triadic singing. In this sense, they resonate more richly in Buklavu than would the case in a Han majority primary school elsewhere in Taiwan.

Walking back near home, we can hear amplified singing. Chiener decides to head on home to see if help is needed for lunch, while I follow the sound a street or so away, to where a villager named Xiao Yu is evidently in his house practicing karaoke. He's a keen singer, and has told us before about how he began to perform at school at about age 9, gradually learning how to hold a note, to dance and overcome his performance nerves, and finally, by senior-high school, to really use a microphone. "That's when I became really brave," he said, going on to emphasize how it's all about stirring the listener's emotions. "Gotta get everyone 'high' [he uses the English word]—some people say that when I sing I have the power to make everyone happy."

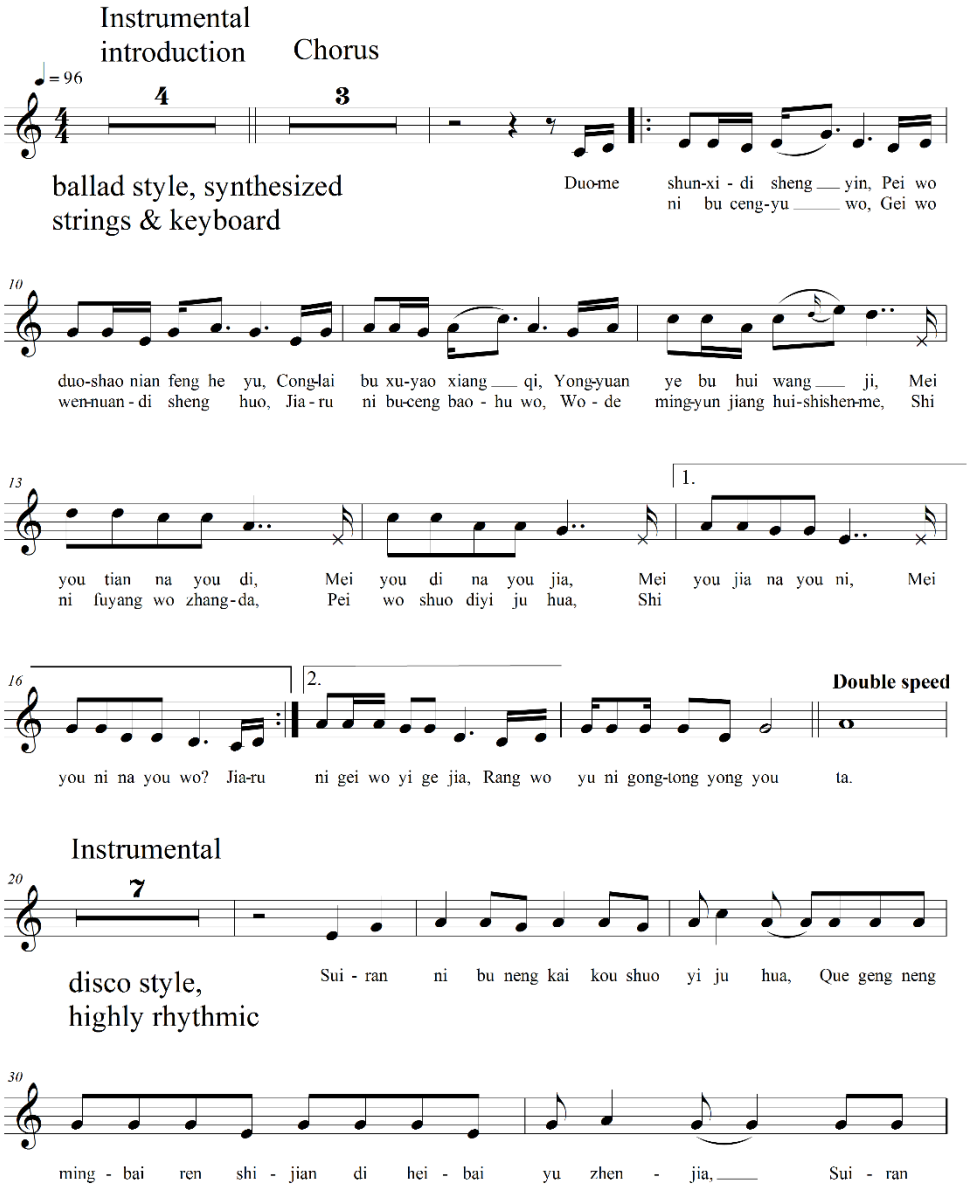
Today he's reminding himself of what I later discover to be an old favorite of his, "Have You Any Empty Wine Flasks to Sell?" (*Jiugan tang mai wu*—the song is sung in

Guoyu, but its title summons up the sound of a roving peddler asking for bottles in Taiwanese). The song was originally created by singer Hou Dejian, whose "Descendants of the Dragon" (*Long de chuanren*, 1978) has become almost a national anthem for overseas Chinese worldwide. "Have You Any Empty Wine Flasks to Sell?" is better known today in a cover made by female singer Su Rui which was used as theme tune for the musical film *Papa, Can You Hear Me Sing?* (*Da cuo che*, 1983; see Fig. 3.4).[6] In this latter context, the lyrics of "Have You Any Empty Wine Flasks to Sell?" articulate the arrestingly passionate expression of an adopted daughter's love for the suddenly deceased father who sacrificed so much for her. Xiao Yu sings it this way too, as a torch song, and he's singing in falsetto to sound more like Su Rui. To me, and admittedly from outside, it sounds like a pretty good impersonation of a woman's voice. This choice isn't a great surprise—on another occasion Xiao Yu has spoken of cross-dressing to perform, and he regularly does that in his current job as a betel nut seller.[7] Dressing as a woman to sing (or sell betel nuts) makes the experience even more "special", he says, but what really matters is inside: "You use your heart to sing, and you use your heart to listen." Xiao Yu evidently knows the song well and so is practicing the song rather than learning it. He runs it without stopping: notes already mastered, and lyrics provided by the karaoke monitor, he can focus on feeling his way into the song's

[6] For more on Hou, whose career includes both defection from Taiwan to China and deportation from China to Taiwan, see Jaivin 2001. Su Rui performs the song at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3UeCqprHC8, with a KTV version summarizing the TV series at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjFV3S8SacE, both accessed 3 February 2014.

[7] Taiwan's typically scantily appareled "betel-nut beauties" have been the subject of considerable journalistic coverage, both inside Taiwan and overseas, garnering praise as a distinctive part of the island's working-class culture and notoriety as suspected streetwalkers. A mild, carcinogenic stimulant, betel nuts are sold at roadside booths to passing drivers and their passengers. Xiao Yu's participation in drag only adds a further layer to the performative aspect of drawing in customers and making a sale.

affective space, exploring its communicative potential, finding ways to make it an authentic act of emotional self-expression.



Song text:

多麼熟悉的聲音，陪我多少年風和雨，從來不需要想起，永遠也不會忘記，沒有天哪有地，沒有地哪有家，沒有家哪有你，沒有你哪有我，假如你不曾養育我，給我溫暖的生活，假如你不曾保護我，我的命運將會是什麼，是你撫養我

長大，陪我說第一句話，是你給我一個家，讓我與你共同擁有它。 雖然你不能

開口說一句話，卻更能明白人世間的黑白與真假，雖然。。。

What a familiar voice, Accompanying me through so many years of hardship, I never needed to be reminded, never could I forget, Without sky there's no earth, Without earth there's no home, Without home there's no you, Without you there's no me, If you did not raise me, Giving me a warm life, If you didn't protect me, What would my fate have been? It was you who brought me up, Accompanied me as I spoke my first words, You who gave me a home, Let me share it with you. Although you can say nothing, You helped me understand the human world's good and bad and right and wrong, Although…

Figure 3.4: Partial transcription of vocal line from "Have You Any Empty Wine Flasks to Sell?"

The song has a pentatonic melody with very little melisma and much stepwise motion. Its range is a little over an octave, with much of the vocal part contained within the span a minor 6th. The phrases are relatively short, generally being of a measure each (two measures in the double-speed central section of the song starting at measure 17), and the lyrics straightforwardly placed. Meanwhile, the faster central section adds excitement, not least resulting from the lengthy instrumental break. And the chorus, which reiterates the title line, even allows others to temporarily voice their support of the soloist. All this makes it an excellent karaoke song. So too is the way it proceeds mostly by way of melodic and textual sequences, which aids one in learning to sing the song but also enables a listener to anticipate much of the tune's melodic and textual playing out. This endows the tune and its lyrics with a

sense of inevitability and emotional authenticity. Karaoke performance is almost entirely predicated on group situations, with individuals taking turns to raise the collective mood. In such a context, “Have You Any Empty Wine Flasks to Sell?” is a powerful vehicle for a participant able to fully embody its deeply-felt emotional payload.

Xiao Yu is practicing indoors, though his voice is very clearly audible from the street, and so his act is both private and public at once. Neighbors in adjacent homes have little choice but to hear his rendition of this song, and, indeed, any other item he continues with. I’m aware that, given the song in question, the heightened emotion with which he’s expressing himself must spring from his imagination more than autobiographical experience. But, and despite having being drawn to the street by the sound of singing, I begin to feel almost voyeuristic (auditeuristic?) remaining there, listening-in but out-of-sight. Xiao Yu’s ardent vocalizations just seem too emotionally charged to overhear even though they’re obviously directed toward social performance opportunities in the future, and even if karaoke is a great example of music performance as a venue for “status battles to show one’s openness to a variety of lifestyle pleasure’s and one’s superior emotional range” (Hesmondhalgh 2013:49). I make do with jotting down some of the lyrics and head back home to ask for help in finding out which song this is.

Afternoon

After lunch, and particularly in the summer months, there’s some quiet in Buklavu as many take a short siesta. It’s a moment when a Bunun mother might soothe her infant with soft, comforting singing. But today no such sounds can be heard from neighboring homes. Tama Umas’s younger brother Bali, who lives next door, has got a temporary job driving an election van for the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, and he’s tinkering with the van’s speakers in the yard outside his home. The general consensus in and around our hosts’ home

is that Indigenous People mostly tend to vote for Kuomintang candidates in preference to their (major) opponents in the Minzhu Jinbu Dang (Democratic Progressive Party). There's a house you can go to in the village, they say, if you want to sell your vote.[8] (As churchgoers, they view this phenomenon with disapproval.) One senior contact explained it as pragmatics: the KMT are strongest locally and have the best networks, so it rather makes sense to work with them rather than risk their ire. And they give the best rewards. There was one time, he recalled, when the DPP candidate was giving a beautiful speech about democracy and equality and freedom. Then the KMT man took his turn on the podium and said, "You see that field over there? Elect me and it's yours." The latter won a resounding victory: you can grow food on a field, our friend told us.

Chiener asks about the music that's playing, an upbeat campaign song. Bali shows her the CD case: it's a special disc from Party HQ. Bali recalls that he had the job before and played some of his nephew Biung's first CD *The Hunter* (*Lieren*, 2000) when he got bored with repeating the music tracks provided, which were just the National Anthem and a few military marches. But his employer heard about it and told him to stop. So, this year, he'll just do as he's been told and not risk his job. "It's not much money, but it's easy to earn!"

The new songs are mostly in popular idioms. There's something for every major dialect group: *Guoyu* speakers, Taiwanese, and Hakka, even a little content that sounds generically indigenous. Strong, smooth voices take the lead, but there are plenty of choruses. The lyrics talk of prosperous, bright, secure, shared futures. Pretty much no one in Buklavu to whom we put the question thinks that the election songs are going to change minds. Hearing them might provide pleasure for the already committed or stiffen campaign volunteers' personal resolve for the demands of the work yet to come. The amplified songs invade the

[8] A vote in the mid-2000s was apparently around $2,000 (approximately US $60), although amounts mentioned varied considerably on the level of the election in question and its perceived closeness of outcome.

heads and homes of opponents, so inflicting symbolic chastisement upon the unrighteous, prior to their assumed-to-be-inevitable crushing in the upcoming poll. All of which suggests that music can't really sell roast chicken; it can only signal its impending availability to those who already want some. Or, perhaps at best its emotional appeal might be able to sway the undecided—those who like chicken but didn't realize they could get some right now—but it'll do nothing for committed DPP-voting vegetarians. Bali's point had been that playing tunes to which people were already attached, which is what the butcher's van does, might actually win the Party a friend or two. But as his KMT bosses might see it, his role is primarily to be seen and heard in a public campaign that makes KMT supporters feel they're part of some greater, unified national movement, even if the real electioneering is occurring mostly in distantiated form via the mass media (or up close and out of sight by means of envelopes stuffed with cash).Whatever the right of it, Bali is finally satisfied with the balance and output of the speakers, and he drives away to bring his musical reminders of the balance of power to villages across the district.[9]

Excepting occasional occurrences like electioneering, the amounts and varieties of music one might encounter in a village like Buklavu pick up when the village primary school ends, and even further again when pupils return by bus from high school. Today, one young teenager has come to learn a couple of hymns on the upright piano in our host family's home. She's mortified to discover that there are two visitors with music degrees in earshot, and seems to be weighing up her fear of making a slip in the upcoming church youth group performance versus an intense desire to make an immediate retreat. At Ibu's urging, the

[9] An article in the *Taipei Times* of March 14, 2004 discusses the musical battle in that year's presidential election at some length, noting how the KMT had recently moved to using specially commissioned pop music. See further, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2004/03/14/2003102470, accessed February 7, 2014.

teenager stays and manages to play each hymn through a couple of times before recollecting an urgent charitable deed that must be undertaken at the other end of the village. Immediately. She rushes away. It's an example of music making sustained temporarily through a sense of duty to a peer group but where the performer is meanwhile overwhelmed by feelings of humiliation. Making music is by no means always a positive or empowering experience.

The themes of musical reiteration and of facing (or giving into) one's fears come together in a rather different way in another music-infused activity engaged in by young people in Buklavu during the period of our fieldwork. 14-year old Ciang is showing us the video game World of Warcraft, which around then achieved much visibility for its newly released expansion named The Burning Crusade. Ciang's got the background music playing, though he's not so much listening to it as immersing himself in the game world of which it is part. He's undertaking quests, slaying foes, pocketing or vendoring loot, and now and then he's chatting to his friends by typing into a chat window that's part of the gameplay user interface.

There are three soundtracks that Ciang's monitoring at once. The first is the background music, which plays much of the time, occasionally fading into silence. The music changes each time he moves to a new zone, rather as the color and style of the setting changes, from reddish, bleak, rocky wasteland (heroic brass melody over a slow-moving chordal accompaniment, *allá* Shostakovich) to blue mushroom-infested swamp (a highly-echoed Asian flute and orchestral strings, yielding to what might be *tabla* and *santūr*) or green, rolling grasslands (static, shimmering string chords in minimalist mode). The music imputes in a rather generic way how the player might care to feel about each new vista, as if providing a back-story for the locale. It will be heard many, many times as Ciang crosses and re-crosses the terrain in question; perhaps for that reason, the music is also generally rather

unobtrusive, with more chords and textures than melodies that might arrest the ear. Would music that demanded too direct attention become stale? In fact, Ciang says he sometimes he turns this soundtrack off and plays his favorite CDs instead. But he also likes some of it, such as the tune that plays when you go into an inn, and he will occasionally pause to listen. He spots an inn and flies downward, his mount disappearing as if by magic as his avatar rushes in through the doorway. "Oh, not that one," he says, as we hear a moderate waltz-like theme. He runs out and sings a few notes to demonstrate the faster tune he'd hoped for, and the track fades out. He sets off to the next zone and finds another inn, and this one has the right tune so he turns up the volume on his PC. It's a 6/8-time jig with what might be a harp, flute, and fiddle alternating the melody, punctuated by Scotch snaps. There's a partially droned bass, and accompanying percussion that sounds reminiscent of a synthetic *bodhrán*.[10] Although it points at the musical style of Anglophone folk music, it doesn't sound very much like an actual jig from the English, Scots, or Irish traditions, not least because each instrument uses a classical model performance style. Ciang isn't listening for traditional music purisms, of course. Instead, he comments on its happy mood, and says it's like a dance. He mouses through a list of emotes, and suddenly his persona onscreen is dancing, though not quite in time to the music.

The second soundtrack is that comprised of a wide range of sounds within the gameplay environment. These run from ambient sounds like bells tolling on the hour in the capital cities to sounds specifically created (or, more accurately, cued) by Ciang as he moves his avatar through the world, including incidental crashes and grunts as he assails his foes, weapon in hand.

[10] The music is online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVmk7VthBQo (beginning at 1:10:28), accessed February 10, 2014.

Finally, the third soundtrack is less diegetic, being that of occasional soft bleeps occurring when a friend's chat message appears onscreen, and the occasional error message (as, for instance, when Ciang attempts to cast an aggressive spell when targeting a friend). With a headphone set, Ciang could add yet a fourth channel, listening to other players as well, whether discussing how to coordinate their attacks against a particularly resilient enemy or perhaps just chatting about other topics outside of the game world. On this occasion, his commentary to us on what he's doing and our occasional questions act as that additional layer. We leave him to his game. He'll probably stay there for an hour or so, he says, less if his friends don't come online today. Taken over the week as a whole, this may be the largest single category of music listening that he undertakes, excepting background music on TV.[11]

If Ciang's focus is on play—tactile, visual, auditory—as opposed to making or listening to music per se, his activity is representative of other usages music finds in settings like Buklavu. Their homework completed, or ignored, groups of teenagers meet up to socialize, with popular music a customary backdrop. Some talk is of the music itself, but much analyzes the singer's latest costumes and his or her romantic entanglements. As in much of the rest of the world, young people in Buklavu become fans of one kind of music or another, and they enact aspects of these enthusiasms among relatively small circles of friends, possibly in distinction to other groups among their wider acquaintanceship. Fandom here enacts a community that is not necessarily coterminous with Bunun identity, and allows one

[11] In a quantitative study of Taiwanese high school students' video gaming habits, Chou and Tsai (2007) note that boys tended to prefer fighting games with intricate internal rule sets or leveling-up conditions, such that they could demonstrate expertise to their peer group, and that fantasy settings (such as the magic portrayed in World of Warcraft) held greatest appeal for those seeking escapist release from everyday life. Other popular games in Taiwan at this time were Starcraft, Ragnarok Online, Ultima, Might and Magic, Tomb Raider, and Quake. Girls played all of these too but more typically chose puzzle-based games.

to feel connection and security with likeminded others, not least when gathered at live events. In this way, fandom is very much about experiencing intimacy among fellow fans, rather than an expression of desire for the target performer. Yet intimate spaces can be characterized by fierce competition too, as fans stake claims to distinctive personal connoisseurship through their practices of musical consumption.

Seen another way, the work of fandom brings selected musical sounds into the everyday, making material their associated values and practices. Chiener accompanied one such grouping to the nearby town of Luye, which is on the East Coast trainline. There they greeted Bunun pop singer Biung on one of his relatively infrequent visits back home. The girls in question prepared for Biung's homecoming by making a banner and a colorful celebratory poster (Fig. 3.5).



Figure 3.5: Fans awaiting Biung at Luye

Note: the caption on the poster reads “Wind-Walker Wang Hong’en”, taking up the name of his 2004 album. Wang’s name is also shown in the overhead banner.
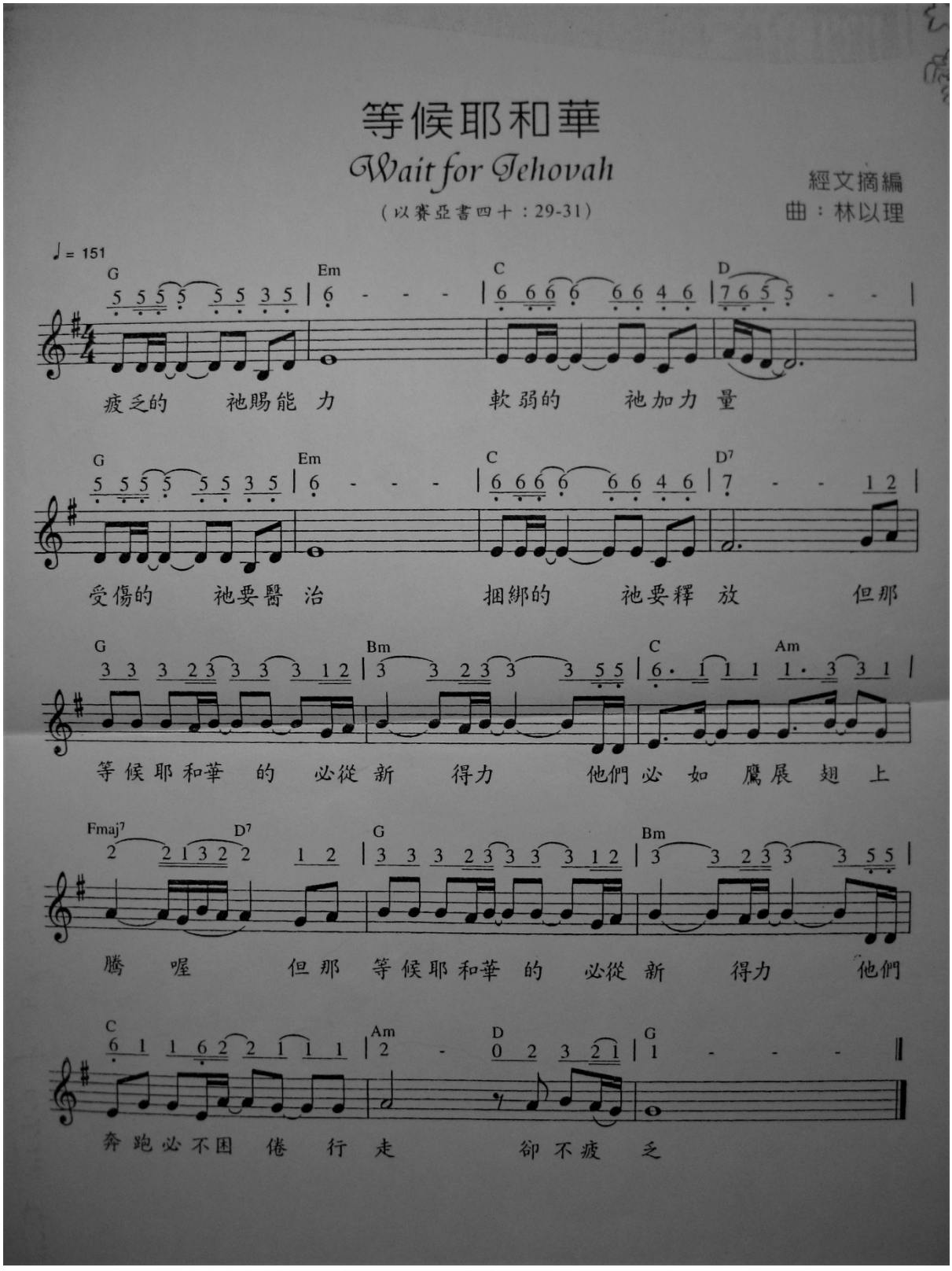
Researching the choice-making involved here isn't straightforward when you stay in a home that lacks children of school age. Bali's son Umas, just next door, was a little under 2 at the start of our research, and so not yet in a position to form his own friendship groups. As a temporarily visiting foreign researcher, the informal socializing of younger people was an area mostly beyond my reach. Even the visit with Ciang above was transformed by our presence: Ciang did not so much play as he normally might but acted somewhat as a digital tour guide, traveling the game zones and, at times, switching to exegetic mode to talk us through the game and its musical content. Chiener had length of fieldwork, age, and nationality on her side. Likely enough, parents and perhaps teenagers too would have found her gender less threatening as well. As such, she was able to hang out with some of the older youths upon occasion. If running such project again now, one option would be to recruit research assistants from within this age range. Doing so would allow the gathering of more detailed inside perspectives on use of personal recording and listening devices, and the downloading and sharing of songs, each of which was a significant part of music-directed activity for many within this age group in Buklavu during the early 2000s.[12]

Evening

[12] Michael Bull notes how listeners use personal stereos to "construct sites of narrative and order in precisely those parts and places of the day that threaten experiential fragmentation" (2000:138). Interviewees in Buklavu spoke of using personal stereos on the daily bus journey to and from high school. In this context, usage was often highly social: sharing a pair of earbud headphones, two students could listen together to newly found or favorite songs, as well as blanking out the repetitive journey. Elsewhere, headphones can be used strategically or self-protectively to differentiate oneself from surrounding activities or relationships, so creating a sense of privacy, or at least a sense of sonic multiplicity, as the world in the song resonates against the world immediately around the listener (see further, Gilman 2016:4).

It is the evening now and the Presbyterian church hall is site for a rehearsal. Thirteen of the Men's Association are preparing for a wedding in eight days time. One of the Qiu family is marrying a girl from out of town, and there's a keen desire among the congregants to put on a good show on behalf of the family, who're long-time churchgoers. Song sheets in hand, they're rehearsing "Wait for Jehovah" (*Denghou Yehehua*; Fig. 3.6).[13] The song is in two parts. In the first 8 measures, two lines (A and A' melodically speaking, verses 29 and 30), show an overall sequential rise from repeated sols to la and then ti. Here, the text tells us that the weak will become exhausted. In the second part (measures 9-17), Lin sets the text of verse 31 describing the uplifting power of Jehovah. And the singers skip up to phrases reiterating mi and falling to re, in what is rhythmically and melodically almost a mirror image of the preceding passage. Lin adds a one-phrase textual reiteration to produce a more four-square text unit, and extends the cadential pattern in line B' so that there's a final turn to the tonic.

[13] I've not found a definite reference to the songbook, but there is a version of this music online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYIq1YWuJyM, accessed December 14, 2013.



Notes: The song sheet comprises a melody in parallel cipher and staff notations.

Chord symbols are placed above the melody. The origin of the text is given as Isaiah

40:29-31 (which states that those who wait upon the Lord will receive great strength) and the composer as Lin Yili.

Figure 3.6: Song sheet for “Wait for Jehovah”

When they’re happy with their progress, they put in some work on “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (*Yesu enyou*), which seems very familiar to them already. Then there’s a discussion of arrangements for a *pasibutbut* performance, but no practice as too few present know how to do it. The men troop through to the main church and join the eighteen-strong members of the Women’s Association. They’ve been working on a wedding song too, with Bali playing piano accompaniment. There are a number of people who play piano in Buklavu, he says, and most are self-taught, as he is. Pastor Qiu Lanmei is leading, and drills each of the parts to do-re-mi before letting them add the lyrics. The song is entitled “The Most Beautiful Road” (*Zui meili de lu*). It’s often used for church weddings in Taiwan, one of the singers tells me. The choir has a song sheet to hand, which has lyrics in Chinese and voice parts in cipher notation. If this music will be a communal offering from the Men’s and Women’s Association to the young couple, it is also an invocation for them of what is now a significant symbol in the Taiwanese Christian wedding tradition. Rehearsing these songs is a task that keeps thirty or so villagers occupied for much of an evening—several people in Buklavu have commented that the church likes to keep its congregants busy so that they’ve less time to socialize in contexts that’d encourage heavy use of alcohol. But it is also an activity that is future-focused, and not only to the upcoming wedding: the lyrics advise the couple of the difficulties they face ahead: “Love is a hard road to walk,” warns the very opening line of “The Most Beautiful Road”. And there’s surely an element here too of the drawing to consciousness of interlocking pasts. Most of the Men’s and Women’s Association are married, and so the song speaks to them too. They all know the groom’s family very well,

and many will have watched the groom grow up. If music "indicates that something is happening in the here and now", as Rouget put it, its feelingful appeals reach out to embrace past and future as well. Finally, Pastor Qiu is satisfied with everyone's work and she calls an end, admonishing all to practice hard over the days ahead.

As we head away from the church we pass a group of neighbors having some drinks in their front yard (Fig. 3.7). As so often in Buklavu, they call us in to join them. Drinks are freely flowing, and everyone is talking at once. Nabu sings:

Mais miling sikis mai kaviaz	When I think of my friend
Mais miling sikis mai kaviaz	When I think of my friend
Cin hang ni mum u laka isang	My heart is lonely
Nipis kasu hai ia tu	It's hard to believe you don't know
Isu uan naka isang	My heart is with you

It's a Forestry Board song, he says. The Forestry Board commissions teams to go into the mountains to replant trees. In the evenings when the forest was dark or when waiting some days to clear the weeds that inevitably sprang up around the newly planted saplings, the work teams typically occupied themselves by singing together and making up new songs. This one has a Bunun melody but new words, he says.

Iman starts telling me about a really nice clearing in the forest—we should all hike there one day, he says, several times. It's a good spot for hunting too. He repeats this statement too. A woman advises me not to get my hiking boots ready: "It's the wine talking, he'll not remember this tomorrow."[14] Chiener asks who knows some drinking songs and gets her minidisc recorder out. A lot of fun ensues as a succession of would-be vocalists, emboldened by the drink, the company, or both, seize the recording microphone and sing into

[14] Yang Shu-Yuan (2001:87-102) and Scott Ezell (2015:148-92) provide accounts of such expeditions, noting the role of group song in combating tiredness as the heavily laden expedition proceeds.

it as if it's a karaoke microphone. The resulting recording is largely unusable—even when there are moments of non-signal overload, there's a background cacophony of those who're less inebriated shouting out that it isn't a karaoke microphone and others laughing merrily at the general level of lively, absurd chaos. I rather suspect that some of the later singers have worked all this out but want to play too. A couple of men nudge another to take a turn, telling everyone that he knows the best songs. Something in their expression suggests that best might mean most ribald. Given that an elderly couple just performed a song with actions about two newlyweds' enthusiastic first night together, we're probably in for an education that's more than simply musical and linguistic. The fellow takes a few deep breaths and opens his mouth, only to be scolded by his wife even before the first syllable has left his throat. He closes his mouth, looks around as if seeing his current surroundings for the first time, and decides that now would be a good time to go home. This isn't quite the fieldwork impact I'd have wished for, although when we meet the couple next a few days later, they chat as warmly as ever. Meanwhile, Bali has ordered the recording device turned off and sung a *Guoyu* song about a man washing himself in the river while a girl takes a peep at his "little bird", which she determines to bite off. Our friends take great pleasure in attempting to explain its nuances to me.



Figure 3.7: Rock beats scissors: The rhythmic interplay of drinking together

Day has fully yielded to night. Some musical usages are sustained from earlier: villagers return from jobs and shopping expeditions in the city, or from visiting with friends. Others set out for night-shift factory work or for their patrols as policemen or security guards. A few may even slip with cat-like tread into the forest, a-hunting for to go. With the exception of the latter, many of these journeys are accompanied by music, whether on radio or personal stereo. Meanwhile, there may be parties underway, whether to celebrate someone's birthday or other special occasion, or just because a group of villagers found one another's company so agreeable that they have cooked and drunk together all evening long, with sporadic singing and the rhythmically entrained interplay of jokes and drinking games.

A small number of new usages arise. Lullabies are sung occasionally, although this is now uncommon—a TV can be used to provide a comforting hum of background noise

instead, so freeing up the parent in question. According to our enquiries, lovers play music to add a further level of sensory pleasure to their nocturnal enmeshments or, more prosaically, to encapsulate themselves privately within a sonic shell. And some nights the listener lies a-bed attending to the sounds of an upcoming typhoon. House boards rattle, external furniture scrapes the ground, trees creak, and branches sweep against walls. Mosquito meshes rattle in the window frames. A distant door slams. The wider silence brings a closer attention to these environmental sounds and their qualities, both aesthetic and in terms of assessing them for perceived threat to life or livelihood. As we do so, sleep takes us to a state where, for the first time this whole day, we become largely unaware of our sonic surroundings. Any sudden auditory impingement, even the most musical, now cues a momentary flash of fear.

Reflections on Emergent Themes

This chapter has presented a range of music that villager or visiting ethnomusicologist alike might encounter on a single day in the village of Buklavu in the mid-2000s. With these various sounds in mind, it's now timely to reflect more theoretically on what this set of usages tell us about the study of music in daily life.

First, while some of these usages were likely to recur daily, others illustrate musical sounds that are common enough but still unlikely to be present every single day of a week, let alone over a longer period. As noted at the start of Chapter 2, terms like the everyday can emphasize the revelation of the typical, thus recuperating for analysis or celebration all the material that's silently disregarded in accounts that focus exclusively on the exceptional. In some contexts, such research has a liberatory function, not least in analyses of larger social formations where the powerful seek to sustain cultural hegemonies, but Buklavu is too small a site for that approach to take us very far here. Instead, my point is that daily musical sounds include both those heard every day with seemingly little variation and those where the

specific example is more exceptional but the broader category it represents is not. This observation helps emphasize the ways in which each daily cycle includes moments of temporary exceptionality alongside its more predictable repetitions. To provide a frame for exploration of this characteristic, I employed a narrative format—the compression of a whole story into a single day—that dates back (at least) to seventeenth-century neoclassical drama and is still found in contemporaneous popular culture, such as the counter-terrorism themed TV series *24*. In Buklavu and beyond, moments of special musical activity are part of, and are woven into and provide respite from, established daily routines.

A second point follows on from this, which is that the day acquires a normative sonic contour for village residents, such that time of day impacts what is perceived as mundane or unusual. That is to say, the habitual sonic patterns of the day establish subjective listening stances among auditors, and these may become so customary that we only notice them when they're suddenly transgressed—when a neighbor starts practicing karaoke in the morning when he usually does so only in the mid-afternoon, others nearby may pause to interpret what's new: have visitors arrived (and if so, who)? Is a neighborhood karaoke contest approaching? The study of daily musical life is thus also a study of the division of the day into phases, each of which is characterized by its associated musical habits, expectations, and listening stances, or to put it another day, what might be everyday at one point of time, might not be at another.

Third, in many of the usages shown in this chapter, a "musicalization" of sound is deployed to invest those sounds with additional qualities. The chimes used to mark the end of a period at the Buklavu Primary School offer an example. These amplified chimes are intended to directly stimulate action, and so signal rather than offer a performance, but the signal's shaping as a musical utterance (rather than, say, a voice announcing "Next period" or a buzzer) adds aesthetic power to the marking out of time: divisions of the school day are not

arbitrary but have their own shapely proportions, proclaim the chimes. If music is “an architecture in time” (Rouget 1985:121), musically tuned signals like this tell us not simply that something has ended but that it would be apt now to move from one space to the next. As noted above, that instruction is underpinned through sonic referencing of both religious and former colonial authority, a detail of tonality unlikely to be apprehended on a daily basis by pupils or teachers in the school but one that nevertheless shows how our histories continue to direct us in the here-and-now.

Such signals cover a wide musical range. Ringtones are clearly less sonically architectural than the school chimes, calling out instead for more individually directed attention in the moment, but when we choose individualized ringtones to signal the electronic drawing near of one or another of our closest contacts, there remains an element of aesthetic preparation insofar as how that ringtone will be overheard by others within earshot. In a small way, all of us with cell phones are inevitably sound artists too, even when our sonic productions are treated as no more than environmental noise by some or all around us.

The poultry sales van and the election van produce even more richly laden music-based signals than even an unanswered cell phone—periodicity being determined only as each is driven into and out of earshot. In each case, their deployer’s underlying intention is, of course, definitively extra-musical: it is clear both that the amount of music used doesn’t prevent it functioning as a signal-type usage and that while we may imagine music’s function as occupying the opposite end of a continuum to its aesthetic, such usages are both highly function-driven and thoroughly aestheticized as well. In each case, the music reminds the listeners as to their life choices, whether short-term and food-related, or longer-term and electoral, but they differ somewhat too: the poultry van driver optimistically sees his listeners as open to persuasion, relying on nostalgic music for product recognition and emotional leverage; those creating the KMT disc didn’t appear to think it could win them many votes so

much as energize the already committed, and they commissioned new music rather than rely on that already deeply infused with their historical aura.

A fourth observation is that while certain musical usages, like those just mentioned, are directed at listeners other than those producing the sounds or controlling the playback, other musical occasions are primarily directed in-group. The same song might be presented as a TV theme song or enjoyed privately be teenagers listening to music together through shared earphones. In-group and out-group are porous categories in performance itself. When the school boys tried to subvert the school choir's *malastapang* chorus rehearsal through (over)enjoyment of the pretense of drinking and by rearticulating Bunun lyrics as homophonic Taiwanese dirty words, they turned their rehearsal, notionally directed toward the audiences of their upcoming public performances, into an arena for peer play and the challenging of the teacher's authority. This temporary subversion is meanwhile also a nice example of the opportunities daily musical performance offers for humor, play, parody, or satire, a theme in several other examples cited in this chapter as well.

Fifth, a key characteristic of much daily music making is its propensity to reference the immediate while simultaneously pointing elsewhere. This bridging effect occurs both through time and space. At first glance, many of the songs mentioned earlier in the chapter represent settings where music is very much part of a here-and-now, for instance when drinking songs are part of an energetically interactive scene of socialization. Such singing might be seen initially as distinct from that where villagers rehearse music with future intent, for example, Xiao Yu's karaoke singing or the shy teenager's piano practice. But both the drinking songs and Xiao Yu's karaoke choice draw on repertories of a former generation. In fact, notwithstanding its usage in the most routine of daily settings, music seems able to point both back and forward in time at once: the church group's singing of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", makes present the soundworld of 1860s' USA while simultaneously spurring

the Bunun choir and their listeners on toward the promise of a future, eternal life. Meanwhile, their rehearsal for a wedding the following week recognizes the existence of a concrete audience in the here-and-soon, whose expectations (and future memories) might be exceeded if diligent practice occurs right now, as well as the history of received habits and relationships among choir members and those training them.

As music bridges time, so too it can open up linkages between cultures and communities. The pop fan's listening to a favorite vocalist, whether from Taipei, Hong Kong, or Nashville, takes him or her for a moment far from Buklavu, even as it temporarily brings the tone of those settings to this small mountain community in Eastern Taiwan. Such moves are imaginary, which makes them potentially powerful insofar as they allow the listener to perceive and explore human values and experience far beyond the confines of the village itself.

At the end of Chapter 2, I stated that music is at once both doing something and doing it in particular ways. The series of theoretical observations that rounded off this chapter show that I now need to rephrase that, since music is typically allowing the doing of more than one thing at once. Music is bringing the exceptional to light within the mundane, contouring the day, imbuing signals with aesthetic and social power, and bridging people, time, and space. This isn't the moment to present a more general conclusion, but it's already notable how few of the instances in this chapter rely upon a simple, unidirectional conduit between sonic means and social realization(s). Rouget's terms, density and materiality—mentioned at the start of this chapter—are useful here, reapplied in the context of the acts of making or listening to music much more generally, rather than to employed to refer to music's temporal aspect alone. With these terms, we might propose that the experiential density of music's materials in (and in momentary relief from) the everyday richly enables us to summon up past and distant locales, real or imagined, and project future possibilities.

Creating and encountering such visions is evidently a regular part of the everyday life of most of Buklavu's inhabitants, and music, including live music making, is very clearly not in decline in this contemporaneous village society in Eastern Taiwan. But there has been a shift in the kinds of repertories embraced as compared to the Bunun traditions introduced in Chapter 1. The soundscape encountered at the time of research shared much with those that might be heard widely elsewhere in Taiwan and beyond. Among the examples was Biung's popular music CD with Bunun song-texts, but other than this it was only through the formal medium of the school choir that Bunun-language music-making occurred this whole day. From this perspective, contemporary Bunun daily musical life is, on the one hand, a rich composite that extends far beyond the boundaries available to the villagers' ancestors of two or three generations earlier and on the other a forum within which Bunun-language singing occupies a marginal position at best. These topics are developed further in the next two chapters, which look respectively at the ways musically infused high moments shape the week and year.