

SEM Conference Review 2014

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On November 13-16, 2014, the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for their 59th annual meeting. The conference was hosted by the University of Pittsburgh and held at the Wynd-ham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown. In addition to a program that included over 500 events (papers, films, workshops, round tables, etc.), the conference engaged scholars from over 180 universities and institutions, and welcomed participants from 18 countries.

The conference program was rich and varied, enabling conference-goers to participate in sessions and conversations that spanned diverse thematic, regional, and theoretical spaces. I took special interest this year in panels dealing with expressive culture and intellectual property, intangible cultural heritage, archives, and repatriation, as well as topical explorations of Canadian song practices and traditions. Many of the papers in this latter category were presented by CSTM/SCTM members – a fine opportunity to reconnect and to learn about the compelling work of our colleagues in the Society!

The 2014 President's Roundtable, coordinated by SEM President Beverly Diamond, was titled *Expressive Culture, Alternative Justice and Conflict Resolution* and included participants from Canada, Brazil, Uganda, and the USA. In their consideration of complex issues around expressive culture in local systems of restorative justice, presenters questioned binaries of "helper/helped" in Settler/Indigenous encounters, explored expressive arts as alternative means of communicating, and wondered about the social effects of expressive culture being used as a means of shaping memory.

Another highlight was the public policy session *Ethnomusicology and Public Policy: Intangible Cultural Heritage and Its Effects on and in the Field*. Its keynote was delivered by Richard Kurin, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution, and provided a fascinating overview of the origins of UNESCO's international convention for safeguarding ICH, as well as implications for governments, communities, and individuals that have resulted: what were the goals of the convention, and how has it played out on the ground (for better or for worse)? While Canada is not a signatory to the convention, its implications for international fieldwork as well as for conceptions of ICH in Canada are significant, and the discussion timely.

There were many other highlights to the meeting in Pittsburgh: an SEM liaison meeting wherein inter-

est in building links between SEM and societies like CSTM/SCTM was articulated; an opportunity to visit the Andy Warhol Museum; and a chance to connect with colleagues and friends in the hallways between sessions (or over a biscuit at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology High Tea!).

On behalf of CSTM/SCTM, I extend sincere thanks to the SEM Local Arrangements Committee, the Program Committee, and the SEM Executive, as well as to the many active participants in, and performers at, the Pittsburgh meeting. It was an excellent event, and we look forward to reconnecting at the 2015 gathering in Austin, Texas.

