"Under the Bridge": An Orientation to Soundscapes in New Orleans

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In November 2006, I marched with 100 or so people in the funeral procession for Adrienne "Shorty" Chancley, who died at age 32 in her hometown of New Orleans. She was, as the expression goes, "buried with music"; honored through a tradition that dates back at least to Emancipation in the late nineteenth century. In this tradition, commonly called a jazz funeral, mourners march from the funeral service to the burial site with their movement regulated by the beat of a brass band (Schafer 1977; White 2001). Though jazz funerals were historically only available to men, since the late twentieth century an increasing number of women have been buried, or "cut loose," in the same ceremony accorded the men. At first, the band plays dirges, somber hymns performed at a slow walking tempo. Then the tempo increases, the dancing begins, and the funeral procession transforms into a street celebration, or what one musician described to me as a "moving block party."

At Shorty Chancley's funeral, the New Birth Brass Band played a slow dirge as the pallbearers exited St. Jude Shrine, and followed with the upbeat hymn "Jesus on the Mainline" after the casket was put into the hearse. The tempo was steadily rising as the horn players called out recent hip-hop songs like DMX's "Shorty Was the Bomb" and the crowd drew tighter around the band, chanting the refrain. As we marched through the Tremé neighborhood, the sound beckoned residents out of their houses and the procession grew until we reached the house where Shorty and her family had lived before it was damaged in Hurricane Katrina. In front of the house, the casket was taken out of the hearse, and Shorty's oldest daughter, dressed in black, was raised onto the white casket, where she performed a short dance, lips pursed, a determined look on her face. A woman explained to me that Shorty's twin sister Andrene had died from a bad heart soon after birth, and Shorty, diagnosed with the same condition, had been grateful for her time on earth to raise two daughters, Terenieka and Teriana.

A hundred yards down Dumaine Street from Shorty's house, at the intersection of Claiborne Avenue, stood the imposing stanchions of the Interstate 10 overpass. The band and the family wanted to lead the procession under the overpass for maximum effect. "Lets send her away! Lets send her away!" trumpeter James Andrews shouted. The bass drummer pointed to the overpass: "Under the bridge! Under the bridge!" The funeral director hesitated. The casket had already been put back in the hearse. Then the police tried to block the procession, telling the band that they couldn't go beyond the designated route, but in a matter of seconds the casket was hoisted up into the air and the crowd moved quickly under the overpass, with the band unleashing its full power and others responding by pumping their fists towards the concrete decks of the highway.

"Under the bridge" is what locals call the space below Interstate 10, and most of the jazz funerals and parades I have attended in the Downtown district of New Orleans have wound their way there. The "bridge" creates intimacy, enclosing parade participants, maximizing a sense of unity, and the concrete makes for spectacular acoustics, amplifying and multiplying the par-

Figure 1. Jazz funeral for "Shorty" Chancley, November 11, 2006. (All photographs by the author.)

ticipatory sound, creating a sort of "unplugged" feedback loop; acoustic, but shockingly loud, and made louder by the musicians playing at peak volume to compete with the sound of cars and trucks whizzing by above. Ideally, the sounds of the music, the crowd, and the environment work together to orient individuals as a collective occupying a shared space.

The way that the sound of the brass band is linked to the physical and acoustic space of the bridge is an example of what Murray Schafer would call a "soundmark," a "community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded" (Schafer 1977:10). Steven Feld has built on the work of Schafer and others to develop a theory of an "acoustemology of place" (1996), suggesting that the interrelation between people, places, and sounds not only creates soundmarks but that specific sound-making activities ground culture in specific localities. Feld defines acoustemology as "local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place" (1996:91), and his many writings and recordings that explore the interrelations between sound, place, and culture have helped to solidify the burgeoning field of soundscape studies.

Beginning from the understanding that place is sensed through sound, this essay extends soundscape studies into the contested public spaces of New Orleans, where African Americans who have been marginalized through various projects of urban planning, gentrification, and disaster profiteering have staked claims on the built environment through displays of expressive culture in which sound is a primary mode of expression. In New Orleans, soundscapes are determined not only by people creating a sense of place through the routine practices of everyday life or the recurring rituals that provide cultural coherence (such as a jazz funeral or second line parade), but also through interactions within imbalanced structures of power that are susceptible to disruptive events such as the construction of a highway overpass through a thriving neighborhood, the development of a cluster of historic homes into a preservation district, or a devastating hurricane that displaces longterm residents.

Research on the mediating role of sound by Louise Meintjes (2004), David Samuels (2004), Ana Maria Ochoa (2006), and others has demonstrated that making sound, listening to sound, and discussing sound are meaningful activities that underscore the significance of sound less as a point of consensus than of negotiation. Ochoa has argued that "the public sphere is increasingly mediated by the aural," and her historical research on Colombian popular music tracks how sound became a "privileged site of constitution of a (contested) public sphere" (2006:807). In New Orleans, I follow negotiations between individuals, groups, and institutions, while also situating encounters and events within the public spaces where sound is created and heard.

The bridge and other landmarks of the built environment, bear the marks of imbalanced negotiations and thus plays a productive role in retrofitting cultural displays to retain their relevancy to contemporary New Orleanians. This is a case of industrial technology not as simply an unwanted intrusion into a pristine soundscape (Thompson 2002; Bijsterveld 2008), but rather as the very "scape" itself.

Ultimately, I will suggest that one's experience of a soundscape is dependent on an *orientation* towards sound, in terms of both physical proximity (near or far, loud or soft) and evaluative listening (music or noise, pleasurable or intrusive). Moving *through* space requires an orientation *to* space, and sound is one way that people orient themselves to one another and to the environments that they cohabit. In the Tremé neighborhood adjacent to the bridge, I found that orientations are not fixed or culturally assigned but are as dynamic and mutable as the landscape itself and the sounds that animate it. Before entering into the contemporary space of the Tremé, I offer some historical context in order to situate sound within the increasingly urbanized public spaces of New Orleans.

Locating Race in the Local Soundscape

The sound of the New Orleans brass band arose within a late nineteenth century industrial soundscape filled with the bells and motors of streetcars, the horns and paddle wheels of steamboats along the Mississippi river, and the ceaseless din of development as the city expanded to accommodate urban migrants. For Schafer, New Orleans would exemplify the "lo-fi soundscapes" of congested areas that "suffer from an overpopulation of sounds" (1977:71), as they are generally far noisier than the "hi-fi soundscapes" of natural environments. But rather than simply produce noise pollution, the industrial and technological soundscapes of New Orleans have had a generative effect in cultivating the celebrated musical and cultural traditions of the city.

Musician Danny Barker, born in the French Quarter in 1909, sensed that "the city of New Orleans has a different kind of acoustics from other cities" which is partially due to the surrounding swamps, lakes, rivers, and canals ("sound travels better across water") and the motion of air currents that carry sound (Shapiro and Hentoff 1966 [1955]:38–39). Barker reasoned that these acoustical phenomena explain why music was able to cut through the lo-fi soundscape; there were "the ice-cream man, the crab man, each with a song or some noise to identify them" and "people walking along singing popular jazz songs, sad mournful spirituals" (Barker 1986:7). For Barker, the kind of acoustics that served as a sonic identifier of New Orleans were localized (resonant in the public spaces of the inner city) and racialized (associated with black musicality); the musical components of the soundscape were both distinctly local and distinctly black.

This distinction was nowhere more evident than in the open-air performance traditions of the jazz funeral and the street parades called second lines, in which brass bands such as the Onward, led by Barker's grandfather Isidore Barbarin, played a local style of black music that was audible for miles. "The most miserable thing a youngster in New Orleans can experience," Barker remembered, "is to be in a classroom in school, studying, and hear a brass band approaching, swinging like crazy, then pass the school and fade off in the distance" (Shapiro and Hentoff 1966 [1955]:15). The autobiographies and oral histories of Jelly Roll Morton (1938), Louis Armstrong (1954), and Sidney Bechet (1959) also attest to the performance of brass band music in the streets as a formative experience. The trumpets, trombones, clarinet (and later the saxophone), tuba, bass drum, and snare drum made a powerful sound that was uncontainable: "you never heard no sixty-piece band could make as much noise as those few guys could make" remembered Morton of marching as a trombonist in his first band (2005 [1938]:101–102).

For many black New Orleanians, there was an explicit racial dimension to the local "overpopulation of sounds." Clarinetist Sidney Bechet interpreted the performance of musicians in public spaces in the decades after Emancipation as "trying to find out in the music what they were supposed to do with this freedom" (1960:50). The music oriented African Americans towards one another—through the participatory acts of chanting, banging on a cowbell or other percussion instrument, and dancing while in perpetual motion—within public spaces where they were now free to gather (in theory if not always in practice) without restriction. Thomas Brothers writes that the second line parade, as a "public display of African American vernacular culture," can be interpreted as a "symbolic act of resistance to Jim Crow" (2006:22). As laws and codes sought to segregate public accommodations into black and white spaces, music defied segregation in its volume and plenitude.

The sounds of black music persisted in public, even as the city's acoustical properties were altered when swamps and canals were drained and filled and the sounds of automobiles came to overpower those of steamboats and streetcars. Structures of racial interaction were also reconfigured, so that Civil Rights legislation intended to integrate public spaces and accommodations led instead to the development of new strategies for maintaining the highest degree of segregation permissible without the legal force of Jim Crow. The construction of the Interstate 10 highway overpass alerts us to the ways that spatial and racial patterns intersect.

In the summer of 1966, the tree-lined median of Claiborne Avenue, at the time a thoroughfare and center of social life in a predominantly black, working-class section of New Orleans, was razed to make way for the overpass. The justification for the highway project was suburban growth. The colloquialism "white flight" is appropriate here not only because it was predominantly whites who were leaving the inner city for the suburbs, but also

because their relocation was subsidized by the government through programs such as the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), which denied loans to African Americans and restricted development to segregated neighborhoods (Hirsch 2000; Hayden 2003). The construction of Interstate 10 also reinforced spatial apartheid within the space of the inner city, as the overpass effectively isolated the tourist zone of the French Quarter from the mostly black residential neighborhoods and public housing projects on the opposite side of Claiborne Avenue. The highway, by design or default, was critical to the racial reorientation of the city into segregated neighborhoods and suburban enclaves. In the ensuing decades, the Interstate has become a contested landmark, and the way it has been integrated into contemporary funerals and parades helps us understand why the combination of instruments and voices careening off the bridge has achieved iconic status as a soundmark.

The remainder of this essay tracks the movements and interrelations of musicians and parade participants, residents and developers in the neighborhood that the Interstate bisects, the Tremé. Though only a portion of my research is based in the Tremé, I have organized this essay as a case study within this small geographic area in order to focus on the strategies of musicians and marchers to organize a successful parade. By focusing on the sound of jazz funerals and second line parades, I limit my interpretation to performance traditions that serve as the sites of origin and grounds for authenticity of the New Orleans brass band, bracketing off the circulation of the brass band sound into secondary sites such as festivals, concerts, and recording studios.

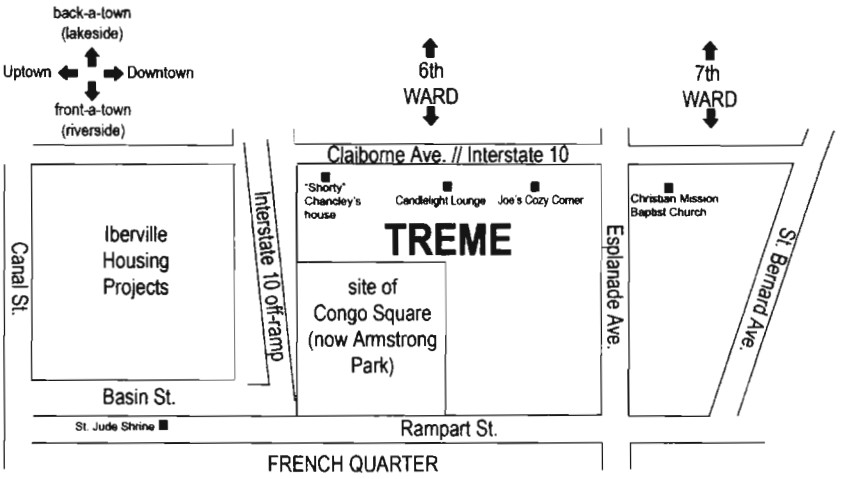
I first encountered the Tremé on an exploratory visit in 1997, before moving to New Orleans to work with the public radio program *American Routes*. At the hotel where I was staying, the desk attendant handed me a visitor's map and promptly drew an "X" over the Tremé. "Don't venture outside the French Quarter," he instructed me. "It's dangerous." But I ventured almost immediately, marching behind a jazz funeral, recording a second line parade sponsored by the Black Men of Labor Social Aid & Pleasure Club for *American Routes*, and attending shows by the Rebirth Brass Band at Joe's Cozy Corner bar on Sunday nights. I left for graduate school in New York City in 2003, and since returning in 2006 my interactions and observations have become part of my research, initially for my dissertation and eventually in conjunction with my teaching responsibilities at Tulane University.

Much changed while I was away. On August 29, 2005, the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina altered the lives of all New Orleanians. Some lost their lives and many more lost people close to them, their possessions, and their places of residence. Some did not return and those that did faced the prospect of reconstructing at least part of their lives. To the extent that Katrina represents a pivotal moment in my own life and work, living in New Orleans

I have found that this rupture is not isolated or unprecedented because it is continuously situated and re-situated in relation to past and present experiences. Katrina blurs in and out of the spaces of daily life, making a lie of the relentlessly used descriptor "post-Katrina" because the "pre" is entwined with the "post" in such a way that there is no clear break between one and the other. As such, I consider my research to be about contemporary New Orleans rather than post-Katrina New Orleans, because residues of the past provide the context in which the present emerges.[1] If my experiences in the Tremé are any indication, Katrina is one of many events that factor into struggles over landscapes and soundscapes.

Take It to the Bridge

Figure 2. Map of the Tremé and surrounding neighborhoods. The Interstate 10 overpass situated above Claiborne Avenue began construction in 1966. (Map not drawn to scale.)



If New Orleans is a city associated with history, memory, and tradition—affectionately referred to as "The City that Time Forgot"—then the Tremé neighborhood has played a significant and highly specific role in New Orleans' ongoing romance with the past. One of the oldest black neighborhoods in the United States, Tremé has been a cultural hub since the late eighteenth century, when the neighborhood was known for the slave dances that took place on Sundays in Congo Square (Johnson 1991). In the century and a half since Emancipation, Tremé has become synonymous with local black culture, particularly the interrelated performance traditions of the jazz funeral, the

second line parade, and the brass band. The Olympia, Tremé, Dirty Dozen, New Birth, Rebirth, and numerous other brass bands got their start marching past the Creole cottages and narrow "shotgun" houses that line the streets. When I moved to New Orleans in 1997, it would have been unusual to walk through the Tremé without hearing a brass band in the streets or spilling out of barroom windows, and though it could no longer be described this way, there was nothing particularly unusual about marching with the Tremé Sidewalk Steppers Social Aid & Pleasure Club, the Rebirth Brass Band, and about 500 other participants on a Sunday afternoon in February, 2007.

The Sidewalk Steppers are one of dozens of Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs in New Orleans that organize yearly parades called second lines (Regis 1999). The name of the second line parade and the practice itself derive from the jazz funeral. In a jazz funeral, the musicians, club members, funeral directors, family and friends of the dead make up what is called the "first line," and the crowd marching behind them is collectively known as the "second line." At some point in the late nineteenth century, the second line detached from the funeral and took on its own identity as a parade sponsored by the city's many neighborhood-based mutual aid and benevolent societies, which carry on in modified form as Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs. While funerals are necessarily scheduled with some haste and proceed from a house of worship to a burial site, the dates and routes of second line parades are planned with much preparation and anticipation. From September through May, there is at least one parade every Sunday, traditionally scheduled on the anniversary of a club's founding.[2] These parades are routed through the neighborhoods of club members, making designated stops at their houses and other significant neighborhood sites, usually barrooms. In the aftermath of Katrina, parades are gradually returning to pre-storm levels, winding through areas in various stages of rebuilding.

The Steppers are a relatively young club, with most members in their thirties and forties, and though they perpetuate the tradition of second lining, their style is thoroughly modern and in step with musical and aesthetic preferences of African Americans in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and other cities with sizeable black populations. In January 2001, when I first attended a Steppers parade, the club members and musicians were dressed in camouflage military fatigues, combat boots, and black face paint. The aesthetics were inspired, in part, by the local rapper Soulja Slim and other hip-hop "souljas" who represent the more antagonistic subgenres of hip-hop, such as "gangsta rap" and "Dirty South." In 2007, the members wore gold lamé suits with black banners and feather boas, and augmented the traditional "buck jump" and "high step" dance moves with more contemporary ones like "the crawl."

The Steppers exited their clubhouse in the Tremé dancing to the hip-hop inflected beats of the Rebirth Brass Band. Brothers Philip and Keith Frazier,

the founding members of Rebirth, grew up in the neighborhood, playing in the marching band at nearby Joseph S. Clark High School and accompanying their mother, organist Barbara Frazier ("Mama Rebirth"), in services at Christian Mission Baptist Church. Since forming in the early 1980s, Rebirth has gained an international reputation as the primary innovators of the brass band tradition, and this has allowed band members to perform full-time, putting them in an elite group of local musicians who have earned money and respect for their musical labor. Rebirth kicks off the Steppers parade with a song that was originally recorded as a collaboration with Soulja Slim titled "You Don't Want to Go to War." At the same time, bandleader Philip and his younger brother Keith came up through the tradition, learning from mentors in traditional bands like the Olympia and progressive bands like the Dirty Dozen, and they are acutely aware of the musical performance practices that their predecessors used to structure a successful parade. Rebirth balances tradition and innovation, perpetuating certain conventions and altering others.

The brass band mobilizes the parade, orienting the participants within a collective whose membership is both fixed (the musicians and club members) and fluctuating (the second liners entering and exiting the procession). The club members march in front, their movement organized by the rhythm of the music, and the second liners fall in behind and along the sides, their proximity to the band determining their level of participation. As the Steppers parade wound through the backstreets of the Tremé, Rebirth assessed the crowd's response and modified their performance—including fluctuations in tempo, beat, and choice of repertoire—to maximize crowd participation. In my conversations with tuba player Philip and bass drummer Keith, known as the "bass brothers," they identified several performance practices that are critical for structuring a parade.

The first order of business is to determine an appropriate tempo for stimulating bodily movement and audience participation. "I think it really does go back to second line dancing," explains Keith: "we want the beat to stay at a certain tempo [in order for] people to get up and dance."[3] In the 1970s, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band became popular, in part, by increasing the tempo of traditional brass band music to match the funk songs and dance styles of the period, and Rebirth stays in this range of about 100 to 124 beats-per-minute (bpm). "If it drops below that it gets kind of boring, and people start standing around," says Keith. Choosing a tempo that is too fast also diminishes participation, as I was made aware when I witnessed a brass band made up of high school students perform their first parade. The musicians, in their youthful enthusiasm, were playing traditional repertoire at the breakneck speed of 140 bpm. There was virtually no one second lining to their music; the crowds were clustered around another band, which was performing music at a tempo well-suited to second line dancing.

Another practice designed to maintain a high degree of audience participation is to sequence songs continuously, without pause. Philip tells me, "We try to play continuous to keep everybody going, to keep the energy rolling." Instead of structuring a performance around songs with breaks between them, the linear progression of a performance is based on fluctuations in tempo. "We might be playing a song at this tempo," says Philip, snapping his fingers quickly, "and right in the middle of the song I might break it down to a slow pace," he snaps slower. "I think it mess with they mind, they heart, they soul. Even me, myself, when I be playing and I slow a song down in the middle of a fast song and then pick it back up, it's like a rush." There is not a single tempo that generates audience participation in brass band performance, but a range of tempos for musicians to move between at different moments.

A successful second line parade depends on a reciprocal relation between musicians and audiences. In a circular dialogue, musicians respond to audiences responding to their music. The choices musicians make in the moment are improvised, in the broadest sense of the term. "We don't want to play any songs straight," Philip says, "we want to keep it spontaneous":

> You hear a little bit of melody, then you hear something else going on. Try to figure, "what is that going on?" It's like confusion, but good confusion, like "I know this! Man, they playing like it's constructed, then they playing like it's not constructed. Is they reading off a paper? No, they ain't reading off a paper but I know what they doing and I can feel it."

In order to create "good confusion," Philip will make repertoire changes instantaneously, sometimes by calling out a different song but more often by simply nodding his head or raising his eyebrows as he begins playing a tuba line from Rebirth's extensive catalog. "We never talk, there's no communication, you just have to know what's going to happen," says Keith. "That's why I say New Orleans brass band music is one of the most improvisational type musics you have." At the Sidewalk Steppers parade, some songs lasted for several blocks, while others were quickly dropped when the musicians took note of dancers drifting into conversation or club members pausing to sip beer, pose for a picture, or wipe the sweat from their brow.

In any second line parade there are moments when traditional conventions that govern musical choices such as repertoire and tempo are observed. Every parade honors fallen club members, musicians, and other significant figures by pausing at the deceased's home or place of business and staging a miniature jazz funeral, typically made up of a single dirge followed by an upbeat hymn that resumes the parade. During the Steppers parade, a ceremony of this sort helped me understand how musical sound facilitates relations between people, providing a sense of place in which the social is enmeshed with the political and the present is entangled with the past.

Back in the Tremé, the sound of the brass band was drawing more second liners out of their homes and onto the street, where Rebirth was playing an upbeat brass band standard from the 1950s, "Paul Barbarin's Second Line," and people were chanting, "Here comes the Sidewalk! Here comes the Sidewalk!" over the tune. Then the procession stopped outside a boarded-up bar and Rebirth abruptly switched to a slow dirge, the tempo and volume dropping dramatically. The Steppers huddled together near the band. Tears were streaming down some of the men's faces. They called the band closer and the crowd encircled them, hushed by a change in the atmosphere initiated not by air currents but by musical dynamics.

The spot was Joe's Cozy Corner, a neighborhood bar that had served as a home base for the Steppers and where Rebirth played live on Sunday nights until the bar was shut down by the Alcohol Beverage Control Board in 2004, after owner "Papa Joe" Glasper tried to forcibly remove a vendor who was illegally selling beer outside the bar. The vendor, Richard Gullette, was shot and killed, Joe was arrested, and while awaiting sentencing in May 2005 he died of heart failure in jail. When Hurricane Katrina struck a few months later, the Glasper family evacuated to Houston, where Joe's son "Lil' Joe" also died of a heart attack. On the sidewalk where these men socialized with the members of Rebirth and the Steppers, a truncated jazz funeral memorialized their deaths and the community's loss of the social hub that was Joe's Cozy Corner.

The song ended, the huddle broke up, and Rebirth seamlessly segued to an uptempo song, signaling that the parading had resumed. The next stop was the Candlelight Lounge, the last open bar in the Tremé neighborhood. Because of the Tremé's central location, the beautiful old houses located there, and its history as the oldest black neighborhood in New Orleans, property values have been rapidly rising and the neighborhood has been gentrifying since the late 1980s. Gentrification was accelerated by Katrina, which displaced many renters and increased the value of the historic homes that line the unflooded streets closer to the French Quarter. Newer residents, many of whom were drawn to the area because of it's rich history of cultural traditions, organized a neighborhood association and sought to enforce noise ordinances in order to close bars where live music was performed (Crutcher 2001:184–185). Currently, the Candlelight is the last social hub for current and former residents to gather.

As I discuss in more detail below, some residents of Tremé interpret music as noise, a public nuisance, and have been relatively successful in imposing silence. They do not orient themselves to sound in the same way as second liners, who, as Rachel Breunlin writes in her study of Joe's Cozy Corner, consider Joe's and other bars as "sites where aspects of community life, such as live music and second line parades, are preserved" (2004: 10). The

loss of these venues in the Tremé has altered the lives of parade participants who then call forth memories of people and places that have gone, literally "memorial-izing" them.

The musicians continually assess their surroundings and work to regulate the movement of the parade as they move through space. Musical alterations are based on complex criteria including crowd response and the physical effects of the built environment. This is how Philip explained it to me:

> When you get to a certain intersection or a certain street where there's an opening, if the street is really wide, you know that's more dancing room for everybody, you want to keep everybody upbeat. When you get to a street where it's more closed, and the parade might slow down at a pace, you slow it down because you know everybody's trying to get through that small street.

In the narrow streets of the Tremé, even the uptempo songs were dialed back to keep the large crowds under control. However, when the parade departed from the Candlelight and turned onto Dumaine Street, past Shorty Chancley's house and towards the overpass, the tempo was rising. In the temporal and spatial progression of a parade, the moments under the bridge often represent the emotional peak, when the scale of intensity is tipped. Phillip says:

> When you get under a overpass, because of the acoustics, you know the band's going to be loud anyway, and the crowd knows that's going to be like some wild, rowdy stuff and you want to get everybody hyped.

On this day in February 2007, hundreds of people gathered at the Interstate, anticipating the arrival of the Steppers and Rebirth leading the second line. Underneath the highway, the parade suddenly doubled in size, and the ecstatic collision intensified when Rebirth transitioned to one of their fastest and loudest songs and the parade participants jumped high in the air while singing in unison: "Re-birth! Re-birth! Re-birth!" Since Katrina, the band's name has taken on added meaning, just as the band's sound has come to represent the distinctiveness and the resiliency of the city, nowhere more so than under the bridge. Among the dancing bodies, I spotted a member of the Cross-the-Canal Social Aid & Pleasure Club wearing a white T-shirt with a message printed in large red and blue letters: "WATER DON'T STOP NO FOOT WORK." How many of us were remembering the days immediately following the flood, when thousands of residents evacuated to the highway overpass, camping out on the blistering hot concrete, waiting in vain for assistance? The engagement with sound and the body links this day's participants to the past, to histories of vulnerability and struggle entwined with perseverance and pleasure.

Under the bridge, the dancing bodies are closest together; the band is playing at its loudest; the built environment provides optimal acoustics; these

human, technological, and environmental forces interconnect, and everybody is hyped. That these peak moments consistently occur underneath the overpass tells us something about how local knowledge, experience, and memory (of the destruction of a meaningful public space) is embodied by the musicians and second liners (dancing in close proximity and producing sound with instruments and voices). For traditions to continue to provide coherence and a culturally particular sense of place, they cannot remain static but must march in step with the motion of time and space. As the environment is remapped by planners, residents, and "nature," musicians play faster and louder to correspond to the speed and noise of the cars traveling above on the Interstate; they compose and curate a body of repertoire that represents their experiences; and they make the acoustics of the built environment work to suit their purposes and preferences.

If the mass of people occupying public space resembles an organized march, than the parameters for interpreting the politics of the participants are in need of readjustment. Organized marches tend to be associated with "official" displays of authority (military parades, political inaugurations, etc.) or oppositional social movements (protest marches, sit-ins, etc.), but the messages of the second line and jazz funeral parades are sung and played in another key; theirs is a politics of pleasure and festivity articulated through musical instruments and moving bodies as well as voices. While official marches, social movements, and parades all stake claims on public space, their meanings are made intelligible in different ways. Instead of discursive forms found at marches with an explicit political program (signs, banners, and speeches), parade participants in New Orleans "speak" through practices linked to black expressive culture: bodily engagement, crowd participation, musical call and response, improvisation, and rhythmic syncopation and repetition.

Armed with some knowledge of the activities of musicians and parade participants under and around the bridge, I turn to the bridge itself and its surrounding environs. The complex history of how the Interstate was constructed and the ways that this altering of the physical landscape, in turn, altered the lives of those living nearby is integral to understanding how jazz funerals and second line parades reappropriate the space under the bridge through sonic and bodily presence. Interpreting the relationship between sound and space requires as much attention to the latter as the former.

Public Space, Public Sound

How has the built environment of the Tremé been altered over time and how do various residents interpret and respond to these changes? In his interviews with older residents who remember Claiborne Avenue as a hub of social activity and have witnessed the long-term effects of its demolition,

Figure 3. The Rebirth Brass Band leads a second line parade alongside "the bridge." November 12, 2006.

Daniel Samuels found that locals understood the decision to construct the highway through this neighborhood "not so much as the impartial product of an engineering decision as . . . the result of a political calculus, in which the decisive factor was the disenfranchised status of the black community" (2000:85). In fact, the original plan for I-10, drafted by Robert Moses in 1946, called for its construction through the French Quarter, along an industrial shipping zone by the Mississippi River, but a well-organized and well-funded preservation group was able to block the project just as construction was beginning on Claiborne Avenue (Souther 2006:64–72). Residents of Tremé interpreted the routing of the Interstate through their neighborhood as a means of disabling them socially and economically.

The city council's decision to construct I-10 occurred at the apex of the Civil Rights movement, directly following the integration of New Orleans public schools in 1961, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The backlash to these advancements ranged from confrontation to retreat. While hundreds of white parents gathered outside school entrances in 1961—accosting the four elementary school girls who were handpicked to integrate the schools, pelting them with stones and threatening them with

death—others were fleeing to new suburban developments by the tens of thousands (Fairclough 1995:244). Middle-class blacks also left the inner city in great numbers, relocating to newer developments primarily in eastern New Orleans, including the Ninth Ward. The city's tax revenue dropped along with the population and demographics shifted dramatically. In the Tremé, the population of nonwhites increased from 58% in 1950 to 88% in 1970 (Samuels 2000:97–98). Those who remained in the city watched commuters to the central business district pass by on the twin concrete decks of a conduit designed to accommodate 54,000 vehicles a day. Meanwhile, their neighborhood, drained of residents and resources, became the target of urban blight campaigns.

In the early 1970s, a city planning commission chose the historic site of Congo Square, where African and African American slaves had performed ring shout dances until the mid-nineteenth century, to construct the Theater for the Performing Arts. Community activists protested that the construction of the theater would displace 114 families and demolish two community landmarks, the San Jacinto Club and the Caldonia Club (Shearouse 1971). When the project moved forward, Tremé residents organized a jazz funeral for the "death" of these buildings, with the Olympia Brass Band marching behind the "pallbearers" carrying a coffin with a dummy inside. The dummy was "cut loose" when the coffin was thrown inside the abandoned Caldonia. Soon after, the theater opened as home to the New Orleans City Opera and the New Orleans Ballet. Two decades later it was renamed the Mahalia Jackson Theater, after the famous gospel singer from New Orleans, and the grounds were redesigned as a green space and named Louis Armstrong Park. An iron fence currently surrounds the park and until recently the gates were opened only for special events, such as concerts of Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *La Traviata*.

On the other side of the fence, the Tremé was home to the kinds of neighborhood performance venues that featured modern black music by the Dirty Dozen, Rebirth, and New Birth brass bands, the members of which lived nearby. While standing with Keith Frazier on a Tremé street corner, he pointed in all directions as he recalled the spots where live music was played in his youth in the 1970s and 80s. "This place on the corner right here used to be the Caldonia," he gestured to a building under renovation. "There used to be another bar over there, where the Tremé Brass Band used to play at, the Petroleum Lounge. That two-story building? That was the Tremé Music Hall." Rebirth practiced by marching in the streets and when they began playing professionally in the early 1980s they rented a band house that became a favorite hangout for aspiring brass band musicians. "There was music on just about every corner," Keith told me, but all of the bars have closed and no one in Rebirth lives in the Tremé any longer.

In the mid-1990s, the neighborhood association launched a noise abate-

ment campaign that systematically targeted each of the live music venues in the Tremé. Despite attempts by the ACLU to protect neighborhood businesses, the policing caused a downward spiral whereby clubs stopped offering live music, clients began going elsewhere, and business eventually dried up. Though most of these establishments have been renovated into private residences, longtime Tremé resident Derrick Jefferson recently purchased a dilapidated corner storefront in hopes of opening a nightclub called the Caldonia. However, his application for a permit to serve alcohol was rejected, and his city council member informed him that the neighborhood association board requested power of approval over all permit requests. Derrick tells me that he has been harassed by police, ostensibly due to noise complaints for construction: "I been jacked up on a squad car with a paint brush in my hand, just for trying to renovate this building." When I passed by the building in September 2009, Derrick was nowhere to be found and there was a for-sale sign on the door.

My conversation with Derrick occurred at a moment when tensions in the Tremé had come to a head. The catalyst for the confrontation was an impromptu parade led by brass band musicians on the night of October 1, 2007. The parade was in honor of Kerwin James, the tuba player for the New Birth Brass Band who had died of complications from a stroke at the very young age of 32. James was the younger brother of Philip and Keith Frazier, and his family and friends gathered to play hymns and march through the neighborhood where Kerwin was raised. This kind of "warm up" for a proper jazz funeral is called "bringing him down," and the sound is meant to be powerful enough to communicate with the dead. It certainly was enough to cause a stir among a few of those still living.

At 8:00 p.m., in response to a noise complaint, multiple police cars—lights ablaze, sirens drowning out the music—descended on the small procession of about 100 people, and officers arrested trombonist Glen David Andrews and drummer Derrick Tabb of Rebirth as they were playing the traditional spiritual "I'll Fly Away." The charges were disturbing the peace and parading without a permit. Much like noise abatement campaigns in other places and at other times (Picker 1999–2000), differentiating between what constitutes "noise" or "music" in New Orleans has everything to do with the way one is oriented towards sound, and those who hear music as noise have been effective in enforcing silence.

Sound-Oriented

Surveying the events discussed thus far, we can begin to interpret the physical and sonic presence of musicians and parade participants in contested public spaces as a way of staking claims on those spaces. "The right to the

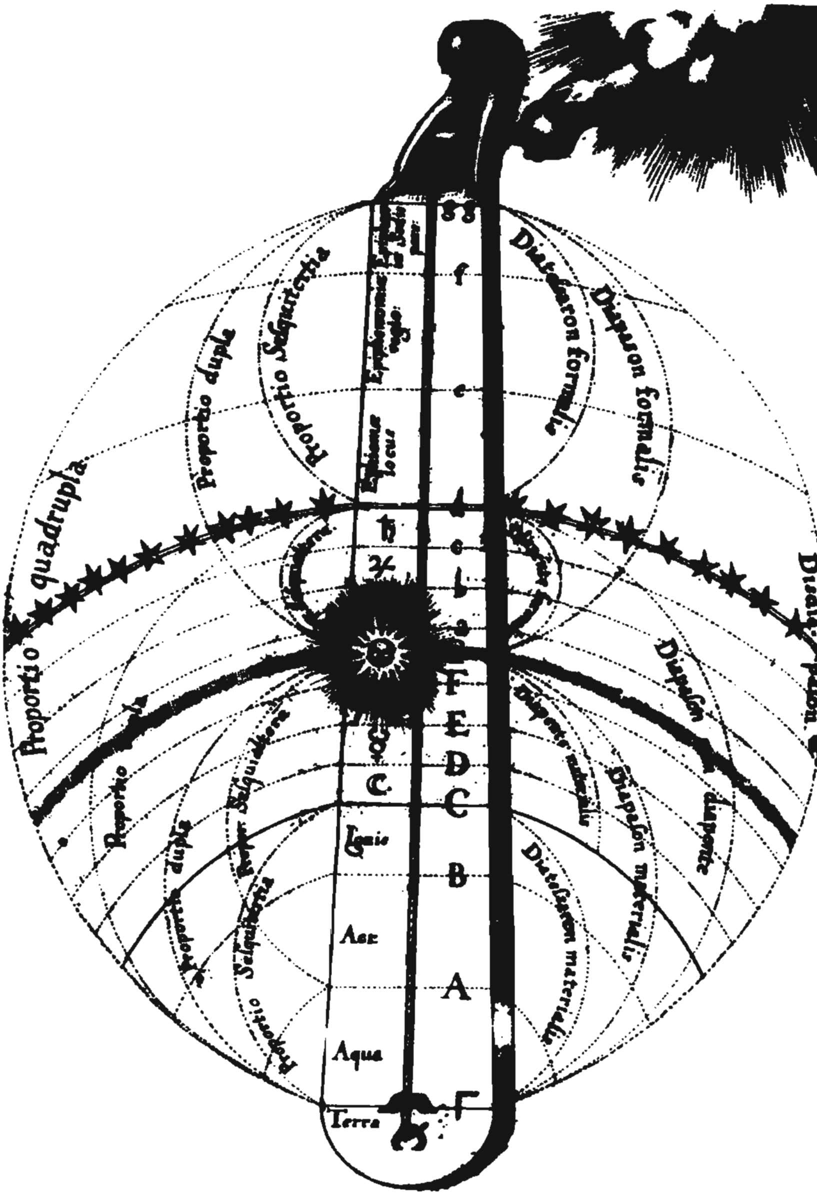
city implies the right to uses of city spaces, the right to *inhabit*," writes Don Mitchell in *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (2003:19, emphasis in original). "[I]n a world where some members of society are not covered by *any* property right," Mitchell continues, "they must find ways to undermine the power of property and its state sanction, to otherwise appropriate and inhabit the city" (2003:20, emphasis in original). Mitchell is drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991; 1996), who theorized urban public space as *abstract space*, or bureaucratically shaped space, which can be reappropriated as lived space, or *concrete space*. Occupying the contested inner city streets of New Orleans through black cultural practices transforms abstract to concrete space, and articulates a "right to the city." The funeral for Shorty Chancley, the Tremé Sidewalk Steppers second line parade, and the ceremonial procession for Kerwin James attest to the power of local performance traditions in articulating claims on public space.

Helen Regis's foundational research on second line parades has focused on the collective agency of the crowd in disrupting the racial-spatial orderings of urban public space (1999, 2001). Regis locates this power primarily in the corporeal, the visual, and the spatial: black bodies, adorned in band uniforms or printed T-shirts that memorialize the dead, transform urban space by "taking it to the streets." When analyzing how second liners unite and "become owners of the streets" (1999:478), however, Regis turns to musically organized sound: "The second line takes people in. It incorporates all those who will move to its music, who become a single flowing movement of people unified by the rhythm" (1999:480).

Here we reach a point where Mitchell's, Lefebvre's, and Regis's theories of public space intersect with Schafer's and Feld's directive that we listen to how place is experienced. In an effort to politicize soundscape studies, or acoustify theories of public space, I want to take up Schafer's metaphor of tuning and extend it into the lo-fi soundscapes that appear to have caused him much anxiety. Schafer originally titled his book *The Tuning of the World* (1977) in reference to a woodcut of the same name by the astrologer Robert Fludd in 1617. As Schafer describes the diagram, "the earth forms the body of an instrument across which strings are stretched and are tuned by a divine hand" (1977:6). Not to be confused with nostalgia for a simpler (and quieter) pre-industrial ideal, Schafer's *The Tuning of the World* and other publications provide a course of action for staying in tune through spirituality, creative listening, and ecological activism.

Though Schafer idealizes the hi-fi soundscape as a place of individual serenity and collective consensus, New Orleanians performing and participating in funerals and parades have found ways of being in tune with their environment despite, or perhaps because of, the presence of a tension-filled hum that permeates the interrelations of people and places like the din of

Figure 4. Robert Fludd's "The Tuning of the World" (1617), reprinted in Murray Schafer's book of the same name (1977).



speeding cars on a highway cutting through a lo-fi soundscape. If the construction of the Interstate represents a political infidelity, then the way that the soundmark re-sounds within the space of the landmark is part of what constitutes the joyful noise of the gatherings. Irresolvable yet coexistent, different regimes of tuning collide in antagonistic unity, creating a sound at once dissonant and out-of-step while nonetheless fully resonant and participatory. Musicians and others retune abstract space as concrete space.

When this sound-as-communication-as-negotiation materializes in public space we bear witness to the fissures and alliances that constitute community, a manifestation of what Arjun Appardurai has called "the production of locality" (1995). Locality, according to Appardurai, is "fragile" and "must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds" (1995:209). A New Orleanian's "sense of place" flows not only from the repetition over time of cultural patterns and practices enacted in culturally significant sites, but also from the self-awareness that the practices themselves are displays of power through which participants make claims on contested spaces.

On October 6, 2007, the streets of the Tremé were again filled with sound, this time for a traditional jazz funeral in honor of Kerwin James. As the casket was carried out of the Christian Mission Baptist Church where Kerwin and his family played music and attended mass, eldest brother Philip Frazier sounded out the opening notes to "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" and dozens of musicians, representing nearly every brass band in the city, fell in around him. The crowd followed the musicians, marching slowly to the somber dirge. When the song ended, the band broke into an upbeat hymn, and the second liners could be seen dancing past the renovated houses, past the Caldonia, and past the Candlelight. A discerning ear could pick out the sound of Glen David Andrews's trombone and Derrick Tabb's snare drum as they paraded past the corner where they had been arrested earlier in the week.

This display of exuberance within a racialized power structure upheld by policies of governance—noise abatement, the issuance of alcohol and parade permits, urban blight campaigns, and aggressive policing—is a tradition in New Orleans that harkens back to the slave dances at Congo Square and the music carried by air currents to the ears of Danny Barker in the era of Jim Crow. It is a dynamic tradition, in perpetual motion like a parade that takes on new participants as it traverses through the morphing cityscape. This is what drew me to the Tremé as a site where multiple histories intersect in the present, and it has also attracted the television screenwriter David Simon to the neighborhood to film the follow-up to his hit HBO series *The Wire*, about the policing of African Americans in inner city Baltimore. The new show, which focuses on the experiences of New Orleans musicians, is simply called *Tremé*.

Multiple Orientations

The brass band musicians, Social Aid & Pleasure Club members, and longtime Tremé residents that I have interacted with—and, for that matter, Danny Barker and the dancers in Congo Square—have each been black New Orleanians who have invested sounds and places with meaning. The question pursued in the remainder of this essay is whether an identity based in race and place is a reliable indicator of an individual's orientation towards sound.

A growing body of literature on listening practices supports the notion that cultural difference is the foremost indicator of an individual's orientation towards sound. John Picker (1999–2000) writes of Italian organ grinders whose street performances in nineteenth-century London disturbed the privacy of the Victorian elite, provoking an anti-noise campaign that stressed ethnic, religious, and nationalist differences. African American slave songs were heard differently by white Southerners, Northern abolitionists, and slaves, though they all regarded musical performance as a salient sign of racial difference (Radano 1996; Cruz 1999; Smith 2000). The circulation of Islamic cassette sermons among pious Egyptians has helped to produce an identifiable counterpublic within the secular nation-state (Hirschkind 2006). In each of these cases, sounds resonate in public spaces as signs of difference that are open to multiple interpretations depending on one's identity.

These analyses of listening have been influential on my own interpretations of soundscapes in New Orleans; however, the variability of my ethnographic encounters has led me to question the uniformity of cultural categories. Those making sounds under the bridge, for example, encompass a broad spectrum of identities and subjectivities, including a sizable minority of tourists on the search for authenticity and white New Orleanians lured across the color line by the mesmerizing spectacle of music and dance. I count myself in that number: I am white and was born and raised in the Northeast, and it was the public nature of second line parades that facilitated my initial participation in local black culture when I arrived in 1997. I join in the parade along with others who maintain some degree of orientation towards black culture.

Among them are diverse sectors of African Americans representing different neighborhoods, class positions, individual experiences, and perspectives on local black culture. Critical studies of racial formation—of how African American culture has been identified and consolidated according to the "one drop rule"—have emphasized the diversity of subject positions that constitute black identity (Omi and Winant 1986; Gregory 1998; Jackson 2001, 2005). Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have been influential in suggesting that popular culture, particularly music, is a critical site for the construction of individual subjectivities within and against the constraints of racial identity (Hall 1992; Gilroy 1993). While identity politics bind individuals together according to

shared characteristics of race and place in a way that allows us to speak of a community of black New Orleanians, those operating within and across this community construct an individual subjectivity by drawing upon a shifting set of identifications based on their interactions in historical and social context. Interpreting the politics of public sounds in public spaces draws attention to both the durability of shared cultural traditions that provide cultural coherence for black New Orleanians and the broad spectrum of possible orientations within this particular identity formation.

Less than six months after the Sidewalk Steppers memorialized Joe's Cozy Corner during their annual parade, another Social Aid & Pleasure Club, the Black Men of Labor, also routed their parade past the site. When the parade reached the bar, the brass band played a somber dirge and the members of Black Men of Labor placed their hats over their hearts and marched single-file past Joe's bar. Because the music played and the emotion expressed was virtually identical to that of the Steppers parade, I took this to be another memorial to the loss of Joe Glasper, his son, and the bar he operated. When I related the event to anthropologist Rachel Breunlin, however, she explained that the memorial was not directed at Joe but at Mark Cerf, a member of the Black Men of Labor who had been killed by a patron of Joe's bar several years ago. On the night of the murder, Joe kept the bar open and continued to serve drinks, which the members of the Black Men of Labor considered disrespectful. During their parade, they expressed their solidarity with Cerf, as well as their resentment towards Joe, by staging a miniature jazz funeral at the spot where each of the men had become entangled in confrontations.

The Black Men of Labor and the Tremé Sidewalk Steppers are both Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs that utilize the ritual of parading to present sounds and images that attest to the power of local black culture. Both organizations are made up predominantly of African American men who are native New Orleanians, and they produce a sense of cultural coherence by dancing to the beat of the brass bands past sites that are endowed with shared significance. Though they identify as black New Orleanians with common histories and traditions, the sounds and images they project are not interchangeable. The members of the Sidewalk Steppers dress in a style associated with hip-hop, dancing quickly and aggressively to the innovative music of the Rebirth Brass Band. The founders of Black Men of Labor organize their parade specifically to counteract the modernization of the second line tradition: their dance style is comparatively reserved, they design outfits using West African fabrics, and they dictate that musicians limit themselves to older repertoire, play at slower tempos, and dress in the traditional uniform of black pants, white shirt, and visored band cap. In short, each organization utilizes the public and political nature of the parading ritual as a way of presenting local black culture in a highly specialized and individualized form. In comparing the cultural displays

Figure 5. Musicians in the Black Men of Labor parade perform a miniature jazz funeral outside of Joe's Cozy Corner (formerly Ruth's Cozy Corner). September 2, 2007.

outside of Joe's Cozy Corner we get a sense of the multiplicity of possible orientations towards sound. Though parades organize individuals into a collective, uniting them in the pursuit of pleasure while causing others to band together in shared displeasure, membership in a collective is rarely unified and stable but rather intermittent, provisional, and open-ended (Warner 2002).

There is the potential, then, for multiple orientations to black culture, which is evidenced by a final example of two New Orleanians who operate on the periphery of the performance traditions discussed in this essay. Adolph Bynum and his wife Naydja Domingue Bynum both descend from free people of color and live in the Tremé neighborhood. Naydja is a retired nurse who works in real estate and runs a small business selling hand-embroidered purses with fleur-de-lis patterns at the annual music festival sponsored by *Essence* magazine. Adolph also works in real estate and managed a family-owned pharmacy in the Desire Housing Projects in the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood from 1961, when he graduated from Xavier University College of Pharmacy, until Hurricane Katrina destroyed the business in 2005. His father Horace opened the pharmacy in the 1940s and is a lifetime member of the NAACP, having run the local chapter from 1968 to 1973. Because of his long-term commitment to providing medicine and food to the residents of Desire, Adolph was twice named king of the second line parade sponsored by the Nine Times Social Aid & Pleasure Club, which was based in the housing projects. When interviewed by club member Corey Woods for the book *Coming Out the Door for the Ninth Ward*, Adolph described the "camaraderie" he felt at his first parade in 2003 as "a highlight, at that point, in my life" (Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club 2006:210).

Adolph and Naydja Bynum are also very active in the affairs of their neighborhood, and after Katrina they founded the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association to "take aim at blight, crime and grime," as their slogan states, within an area newly defined as "Historic Tremé" that includes the blocks between the French Quarter and the Interstate (excluding those on the other side of the overpass). Many association members own multiple properties in the neighborhood and the board's *raison d'etre* is to protect investment through architectural preservation (from "blight"), increased security (against "crime"), and beautification (of "grime"). Gladys Marigny, for example, is renovating Joe's Cozy Corner into a duplex apartment. The exterior of the shotgun house has been restored to reveal the original advertisements for Jax Beer and Ruth's Cozy Corner, the predecessor to Joe's. On the opposite corner is a large two-story building that is under renovation by the Bynums. Soon to be among the twenty or so properties in the neighborhood that Adolph and Naydja manage, the building is remembered by the Steppers and Rebirth as the Tremé Music Hall, and Danny Barker would most likely have known it as the home of Alphonse Picou, a clarinetist from the first generation

of jazz musicians. "There's a lot of history on that corner," Bynum is quoted as saying in the Preservation Resource Center newsletter. "We're walking through history in Tremé, and we all appreciate that" (Bonnette 2008:10).

The association's campaign to (re)colonize Tremé by imposing "quality of life" standards has included working closely with the New Orleans Police Department to enforce noise ordinances and oppose the issuance of permits for venues offering live music indoors and more informal gatherings outdoors. At least in relation to the privacy of the home and the inalienable rights of property ownership, association members interpret the sound of brass band music as noise. They orient themselves in opposition to cultural processes as a source of noise even as they proclaim the historical significance of cultural objects in need of preservation. Yet, as the second line parades of the Black Men of Labor and the Tremé Sidewalk Steppers and the jazz funerals for Kerwin James and Shorty Chancley demonstrate, performance traditions have not been relegated to a silent, passive stroll through history, but have remained vital and relevant through the ongoing activities of participants. Sound mediates the relations of individuals and groups with varying orientations. The only entity that sound resists with certainty and consistency is silence.

Surely Adolph Bynum enjoyed the music of the Rebirth Brass Band as he reigned over the Nine Times parades, and on more than one occasion the Bynums have been observed dancing to live music in the wee hours between midnight and day. Like most of us, their interpretation of sound as music or noise is situational and revisable, and also like most of us, the sum of their actions does not produce a consistent and unified identity. Attempting to accommodate a broad spectrum of orientations and scenarios—the possibility, for example, that a musician or second line participant may have driven on the Interstate to get to a parade—requires sensitivity to precise historical and social context.

I have incorporated the Bynum's story into my discussion not to suggest that the soundscapes of New Orleans should be interpreted as incoherent or dissonant, but to demonstrate the power of sound as a site of negotiation by presenting a diverse array of performers and listeners with varying orientations towards sound. There is a shared understanding that the making of particular sounds in particular places is a way of producing locality, but there is not necessarily consensus on what that locality should look and sound like. Sounds and spaces not only morph over time, they take on different shapes before our eyes and ears depending on how we situate ourselves within and against them.

Soundscapes in New Orleans derive from a complex interrelation of sound and space, the history of which is marked by development projects that have consistently marginalized African Americans. The built environment, bearing the scars of struggle over renewal and preservation, has nonetheless

been critical to reshaping black cultural displays as forums for vital social communication. Making public sounds in public spaces is, quite literally, a practice of being heard. How these sounds are interpreted by various listeners is dependent on their orientation towards them, which relates to history, culture, and biography in ways that are not always predictable. Soundscapes encompass multiple, sometimes opposing, subject positions, and this is precisely why they have been so critical to the production of locality in New Orleans.

Notes

1. On the anthropology of the contemporary, see Rabinow and Marcus (2008). On the anthropology of the emergent, see Stewart (2005).

2. Following Hurricane Katrina, many clubs rescheduled their parades so that they no longer fall on the anniversary of their founding.

3. I have spoken with Philip and Keith Frazier regularly since 2006 and their quotes derive from various conversations including recorded interviews on November 7, 2006 (Philip) and April 12, 2007 (Keith). Portions of their interviews can be heard in the *American Routes* radio segment at http://americanroutes.publicradio.org/archives/artist/609/new-orleans-brass-bands ("New Orleans Brass Bands" accessed June 5, 2009). Though these and other black New Orleanians frequently speak in a dialect known colloquially as Ebonics, I have decided against attempting to capture these spoken subtleties in writing, choosing to present speech in denaturalized form rather than as naturalized text or "eye-dialect" (Bucholz 2000). That said, I have not made grammatical or syntactical "corrections" to non-standard English (i.e. "you gotta go" would be written "you got to go" and not "*you've* got to go"), though I recognize that this occasionally presents awkward phrasing.

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