"PEIRCEAN PHENOMENOLOGY AND MUSICAL EXPERIENCE"(1)

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Abstract: After introducing the social potentials of some of C.S. Peirce's sign types, this article explores the value of his primary phenomenological categories—Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness—for thinking about musical experience. The categories are distinguished in relation to the types of signs operating, or not operating: Firstness is non-semiotic; Secondness involves rhemes, dicents, and iconic and indexical signs; and Thirdness involves symbols and arguments as well as the lower-level signs. The author uses his own experience as an old-time dance musician to explore the experiential states of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. The primary argument is that Peirce's semiotics are foundational for a distinctive approach to phenomenology, which, in turn, has much to contribute to understanding musical experiences.
Keywords: Peirce - Phenomenology - Semiotics - Music - Old-time music.

This paper was largely inspired by Ruth Stone's 2008 book, *Theory for Ethnomusicology*. In that publication Professor Stone briefly mentions the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce and my treatment of them in her chapter on linguistic approaches in ethnomusicology, while in her chapter on phenomenology she makes no mention of Peirce at all. This misunderstanding is partially the fault of those of us who have advocated the value of Peircean theory for musicological work. It seems that we did not make it clear that Peirce's theory of signs was primarily a foundation for understanding human perception, experience, and thought, that is, to understanding people's processes of being in-the-world—the focus of phenomenology. Influenced by structural linguistics and a hodgepodge of other approaches, musical semiotics has gone off in a variety of directions, many of them blind alleys, such that Peircean theory has been damned by terminological association with the dreaded S word. In this lecture I want to offer a corrective and re-contextualize Peirce's ideas about signs within a larger phenomenological project.

Steve Friedson, Jeff Todd Titon, Tim Rice, Harris Berger, and Judith Becker, just to name a prominent few, have demonstrated the usefulness of phenomenological perspectives for ethnomusicology. I agree. But Peirce adds a whole set of tools for understanding the processes of being in the world that continental phenomenology does not. The main sign types which are of concern to music scholars—especially , the icon, index, symbol, rheme, and dicent--each involves different types of processes grounding individual selves in the world, and each provides *distinct potentials for experience*. Likewise, Peirce's basic categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness provide a novel approach for understanding musical experience. I will begin with some basic ideas about key sign types in music as necessary scaffolding for thinking about mental states of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness during musical performance.

Signs
To begin at the beginning, a basic Peircean definition for *sign* is "something that stands for something else to someone in some way so as to create an effect in an actual perceiver." In

Peircean thinking, all semiotic instances involve three terms: (1) the sign, (2) what it stands for, or its *object*, and (3) the effect created by the sign-object relation, or its *interpretant*. All semiotic instances are dependent on the individual histories, or what I call the *internal contexts* of perceivers (Turino, *Music as Social Life*). A perceiver's internal context determines the very recognition of something as a sign, what its object and effect will be, as well as the manner in which the sign and object are connected. Thus, a Peircean approach must be grounded through the ethnographic analysis of actual instances and perceivers and precludes positing an 'ideal listener' or 'culture bearer' in musicological description and analysis. Peirce suggested three ways that signs are connected to what they stand for. His names for these three types of connective processes—*icon, index, and symbol*—are his most famous concepts, and rightfully so since they strongly influence the potential effects and functions that a given sign will have in social life.

The Social Life of Icons

Icons are the connection of sign and object through some perceived resemblance between the two. Note that while the bases of resemblance are inherent in the signs and objects themselves, people are socialized to focus on certain characteristics of phenomena and ignore others. Thus iconicity, and signs more generally, are partially determined by the objective world, that is, qualities in the signs and objects, and partially the result of learning to attend to the world in certain ways. This situation points to an underlying Peircean premise that has been called *semiotic realism*; i.e., the objective world influences the capacity of something to operate as a sign and through signs influences our perceptions of and experiences in the world. Semiotic realism usefully provides a middle way between objectivist and subjectivist as well as idealist and realist worldviews.

The primary social functions of icons are fourfold. All *form* recognition depends on iconicity: rhymed lines in poetry indicate form just as the iconicity of motives and sections allow for form recognition in music. This aspect is basic to perception but needs little elaboration. Second, icons are the basis of all token-type relationships, all category formation. The lumping of phenomena into categories seems to be a process that is hardwired in humans as Susan Gelman (*The Essential Child*) has suggested, and it is one of the most basic cultural processes (e.g., see Hall, *Beyond Culture Garden City*). The initial phase of interpreting and reducing doubt about a novel experience usually involves making token-type connections, i.e., searching for the identity of that experience in relation to previous 'similar' experience.(2) The initial interpretive move (Feld, "Linguistic Trends in Ethnomusicology") most people make when they encounter a new piece of music is to mentally search for a genre or type to which it belongs: "sounds like." Spinning the radio dial one instantly recognizes 'country music' from the sound of a steel guitar or a certain vocal timbre, and so halts, or keeps spinning, the energetic effect of the sign.

A third type of iconic process, one which is crucial for explaining why artistic experiences so frequently inspire the imagination, is what I call the "inkblot function." The inkblot function is based on the fact that (1) all signs operate in relation to the histories of individual experience, or the *internal contexts*, of perceivers, and (2) it is also based on the near-automatic human propensity to make token-type connections. Inkblot tests work as a psychological tool due to these two human tendencies. Because of the basic drive to relate a perceptual instance to a general category, people tend to seek resemblances in novel forms and experiences with things that they already know. In forms where iconicities are not explicit or obvious, perceivers often make imaginative leaps to make such connections. Viewing a series of clouds, or an abstract painting, or listening to music often inspire leaps of imagination to find an iconicity between the perceived sights and sounds and other known things that these icons then

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call to mind through resemblance. This propensity to make creative iconic connections provides a special space for, and drives, the imagination, explaining a fundamental effect of artistic experiences and other semiotic devices such as *metaphor*.

The Social Life of Indices
        The concept of index refers to the connecting of a sign and object by a perceiver through co-occurrence; i.e., the perceiver has experienced the sign and object together, often repeatedly, and so their connection is simply true or a fact. Because indices are totally based in individual experience their effects are *highly unpredictable* even among different individuals within the same context—they are particularly reliant on the *internal contexts* of perceivers. When based in repeated individual experiences, which may also be redundant social and even mass experiences, indexical connections become fundamental to the basic habits of the self (Turino, *Music as Social Life*, Chapter 4). As indexical connections *become* habitual, they come to be perceived as natural--part of ones common sense conceptions of reality. When deeply grounded in habit, this "reality function" of indexical signs often creates particularly *direct*, un-reflected upon, effects at a variety of levels of focal awareness.

        While it is the reality function of indices that make them particularly powerful for political, commercial, and personal persuasion, indices have other social and musical functions. Some indices may simply point to their objects, or draw attention to the Now of experience or some particular object or phenomenon. The use of dramatic musical events in presentational performance, for example, is crucial for drawing listeners into the *indexical now* and for creating the progressive structure of the piece—the introduction of notable events in performance promise future events and so maintain attention and a future orientation in listening.

Indices also have a metonymic function in which the part stands for the whole. Again contributing to the reality function of indexical signs, a song, genre, or style that is part of the practices of a particular region or social group can index that region or group. Likewise, when a song is a prominent part of the shared experience of lovers it can—part standing for the whole--index the lover and the relationship. Simon Frith and many others have noted that the music one listens to in ones teens and twenties remains powerful later in life; the metonymic function—musical experience standing for the whole of youthful experience—may again be operating. As these later examples suggest, indexical signs are paramount in creating emotional effects, *but in direct proportion to the emotional potency of what the signs stand for*. The metonymic function also suggests why music so frequently provides such direct, potent signs of social and individual identity.

        While indices often point to, are metonymically part of, or simply co-occur with phenomena existing out in the world, indexical relations also importantly pertain among signs in given contexts. The definition of a word with other words is a common example wherein the primary indexical connections are among the linguistic signs. I coined the term *indexical cluster* to refer to instances when the strongest indexical associations of a sign are with other signs in the instance that then may become habitually connected through repetition of the sign cluster. Nationalist and academic canons of music and dance are a good example of indexical clusters (see Turino, *Music as Social Life*).

The Social Life of Symbols
        Peirce used the word *symbol* to refer to a third way of connecting signs and objects. Although for most people the vast majority of signs operating in music are icons and indices, it is worth elaborating the concept of symbol because it is the main sign type used in scholarly

thinking, writing, and teaching, and it is among the Peircean concepts least understood. Peirce's own discussions of the symbol were vague and changing, and there is much disagreement among Peircean scholars regarding this term. I came to my, admittedly minority, definition of the concept by beginning with what it is about, and it is crucial for my larger theme to explain my position here. The concept of symbol refers to a third way that signs are connected to what they stand for beyond resemblance and co-occurrence. After thinking about and discussing the problem for twenty-five years, I have come to the conclusion that the only third way of connecting sign and object is through linguistic definition.

Thus, I define Peircean *symbols* as signs connected to what they stand for by linguistic definition, but equally important, people must agree on the definition of a symbol within a given context if it is to function as a symbol. The third aspect of symbols, as Peirce said, is that they are general signs for general objects; symbols stand for general classes and conceptions of phenomena, these objects themselves being symbols, rather than specific entities in the world. All three of these features—linguistic definition, social agreement, and generality--must be present for a sign to operate symbolically, and together they explain the special capacities of symbolic discourse and thought.

To illustrate points of disagreement, Valentine Daniel (Introduction" to *Fluid Signs*) and others follow Peirce in defining *symbol* simply as a sign based in convention. While social agreement—convention--about a symbol's definition is a necessary component of my conception, *convention* is not a sufficient criterion because it not a manner of linking sign and object; rather it is a description that such a linkage is socially shared. Moreover, convention is not unique to symbols; there are conventional indices and icons. A T.V. theme song can index the program among millions of viewers who regularly watch the show, but the sign-object connection is still made through co-occurrence of the song and program in individual experience. That is, the song is a mass index not a symbol. The manner in which sign is connected to object is the lynchpin of my criteria for distinguishing icon, index and symbol. For those who use convention as the sole criterion for defining symbols, mass indices, by definition, become symbols, but this disregards the manner in which perceivers connect sign and object. This move also diminishes the theoretical utility of the symbol as a concept and it does not adequately account for the special nature of symbolic processes.

Most English speakers use the word *symbol* as a synonym for what Peirce called *sign* because they have learned its meaning through indexical clusters such as national symbol, religious symbol, symbol of our love. For the sake of this discussion I ask you to keep in mind that I am using this term specifically as I have defined it. If you accept my definition for the purposes of this talk, the term will be operating as a symbol.

Words defined with other words are the most abundant examples of Peircean symbols, but there are many forms. If I tell you a certain musical motive means 'red,' and when hearing that motive again you think the general concept 'red' then the musical sound functioned as a P-symbol. If you are told in music history class that the fourth movement of Beethoven's Fifth means 'triumph' and you think this general concept when hearing it, the fourth movement is operating as a P-symbol. I would suggest, however, that most people do not connect musical signs with objects in this way, but rather do so through resemblances and co-occurences.

The most basic symbolic process is the ability to create or learn new sign-object relations through the use of language, as we are practicing here. This serves as the basis for contextual flexibility as well as semantic specificity, and thus common understanding and precision of

thought. Symbolic process also allows for the invention of P-symbols to refer to new ideas and abstractions that can not be pointed to in the world, but that can help us think about the world in new ways. The central social function of symbols is to make general, theoretical, synthetic, thought and communication possible. P-symbols allow for greater precision in thought and communication because, by definition, we can designate rather carefully through language what we mean by a sign, and we can ask our perceivers to agree to understand the sign in that way, at least for purposes of the specific interaction.

While symbols always need words to make the sign-object connection, words are not always symbols. In normal conversations we are constantly shifting between the iconic ("its like"), indexical ("you mean *that* girl?"), and symbolic ("what I meant was . . .") modes of interaction. As children we learn the meaning of many words in an indexical way—pointing her *index* finger the child asks, "Mama, what is *that*?" Many words retain this indexical level of meaning, i.e., some existential connection with objects in the world; but what is crucial to remember is that as we move into symbolic thinking and communication, the existential connections increasingly shift from phenomena out in the world to other P-symbols in language as the objects of the signs.

 The specific sign processes are predisposed to serve different human functions and they are clustered in particular types of activities. For example, academic work is primarily symbolic, while for me playing old-time music primarily iconic and indexical. Sensory, emotional, and energetic semiotic effects are grounded in iconic and indexical relations, and thus exercise our sensory and physical selves as opposed to the effects generated by symbols which are typically word-based symbolic thought. In my own life, if I want to express or experience emotion or experience my body or give way to my imagination I play music or dance. However if I want to understand and explain, in some specific detail, how these arts create the effects they do, I need a systematically ordered symbolic framework to think new thoughts and analyze the problem with as much precision as I can muster. One can only theorize the general expressive, emotional, and physical potentials of icons and indices in music through the use of symbols. Symbolic thinking is necessary to understand the very limits of symbolic thinking and thus the human necessity of art.

Peirce's Phenomenology
        I would now like to return to my opening suggestion that Peircean thinking is a tradition of phenomenology with the added benefit of a whole series of conceptual tools that help clarify a range of ways-of-being-in-the-world." Central to Steve Friedson's phenomenological approach in his book Dancing Profits is the idea that "Interpretation does not arise from or flow out of experience—lived experience is, at its very inception, an interpretation" (*Dancing Prophets:* 5). From a Peircean perspective it is common sense that lived experience is an interpretation because all experience is initiated by the perception of signs that have some type of effect in the people involved. Peirce's concept of the interpretant is original here in that it comprises both the act of interpreting and the meaning of a sign. In his description of Tumbuka trance dancers and musicians in Malawi, Friedson emphasizes a certain type of musical experience—that of being there in immediate moment during performance before any distinctions between act and content, between subject and object, or between performer and sound.
        Similarly, in his discussion of the value of phenomenological approaches for ethnomusicologists, Jeff Todd Titon describes playing in an old-time string band as a peak personal experience of immediacy; he uses this as his "paradigm case of musical 'being-in-the-world'." I quote at length:

"Here is how I would describe this experience phenomenologically. . . . Playing the fiddle, banjo, or guitar with others, I hear music; I feel its presence; I am moved, internally; I move externally. Music overcomes me with longing. I feel its affective power within me. Now I have moved from what phenomenologists call the "natural attitude," the normal everyday way of being in the world, not to an analytical way but to a self-aware way. I feel the music enter me and move me. And now the music grows louder, larger until everything else is impossible, shut out. My self disappears. No analysis; no longer any self-awareness. The shutting out is a phenomenological reduction, what Husserl called *epoché*. It is a radical form of suspension. I no longer feel myself as a separate self; rather, I feel myself to be "music-in-the-world." That is, the be-ing of desiring brings me to myself, re-presents myself to consciousness. The "I" returns; I am self-aware, I see that I and others are making the music that I hear" (Titon, "Knowing Fieldwork" 93-94).

In past work I have taken pains to try to explain the immediacy of some musical-dance experiences whereby participants are fully in the moment and integrally unified with each other-and-sound-and-motion. Friedson's and Titon's writing also resonates with my own, and I am sure many musicologists,' difficulties putting such experiences effectively into general terms—i.e., Peircean symbols. The unreflected upon quality of certain performance experiences--here being reflected upon--points directly to the operation of iconic and indexical signs without the mediation of symbolic thought during those moments of performance. This less mediated quality of experience can not be reproduced in the symbolic mode, but only referred to and explained in general terms.

In his book *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music*, Bruce Benson follows Hegel and Gadamer to take a different tack in regard to musical experience. He argues that "an essential ingredient in having a genuine Experience *(Erfahrung)* is the element of surprise: it is precisely when we do not expect something that it affects us the most."(118) This is what I referred to earlier as the effect of i*ndexical nows* provided by notable musical events within a performance; the resulting experience, however, is likely to be quite distinct from the musical/social merging emphasized by Friedson and Titon. It is also likely to be distinct from listening to a symphonic movement in a "drop-the-needle [laser?]" music history exam where one hopes there will be no surprises and where symbolic reflection may be required when searching for the correct types (composer, genre, period, form) for that particular token.

From a Peircean perspective it is counterproductive to reduce musical experiences to any one type or cause, or to proclaim one type of experience more genuine than others. More to the point, for a Peircean phenomenology of musical-dance experience, within any given performance it is likely that a person's attention and state of mind will shift among a variety of modes of experience, as hinted at in Titon's description. Again Peirce offers concepts—his basic categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness—to help us think about this.

Simply put, Firstness refers to an entity without relation to a Second, that is, an entity in-and-of itself. Secondness is the direct relationship between two entities without the mediation of a Third; Secondness it is brute force, cause and effect, and automatic habit. Thirdness in human experience involves the mediation of a First and a Second but in a special way; it involves a mind and symbols to generalize about or synthesize—make something of--the relationship between the First and the Second. For example, wind blowing a flag with no one there to see it is Secondness; when an observer deduces wind direction it is Thirdness. Habitual, automatic, movements of

fingers on a fretboard is Secondness; decision-making about where to move ones fingers next or what chord to play is Thirdness. For the most part Firstness involves a mental abstraction or a guess about the in-and-of-itself character of something. I can think of no actual examples of entities in the world that are not connected to something else, e.g., a tree and the soil that sustains it. Logically, however, Secondness experiences, which we all have continuously, proves the reality of Firsts in that there can be no Seconds without Firsts—any 2 requires the existence of a 1.

The clearest ontological example of Firstness I can conceptualize involves a state of mind, or as Buddhists would put it, 'no-mind.' It is that state of mind when all thought and perception have ceased and thus the self and consciousness, is, for those moments, separate from the world and is in-and-of-itself. It is important to emphasize that Firstness can only be perceived as an experience after the fact—recognition of that state of being ends it by bringing the experience into a mental relation with something else.

As a point that has created confusion, each of the Peircean sign types has relative qualities of either Firstness (e.g., the icon), Secondness (the index), or Thirdness (symbol) within the overall ontological Thirdness of semiosis, i.e., sign-object-interpretant relations are triadic. As a mental state, or type of experience, Firstness is pre- or extra-semiotic. As I said, as soon as the experience is recognized, signs enter in and that state of mind is ended. The mental state of Secondness involves the signs of Firstness and Secondness, the icon and the index without the mediation of symbols. Thus, a chain of movements on a guitar fretboard are linked as physical icons to the same movements executed in the past--are habitual--and one movement gives rise automatically to the next through indexical association, all this can, and often does, take place without mediating symbolic thought about the movements one is executing, that is, without entering into the mental state of Thirdness.

The types of experience Friedson and Titon seems to be describing, when no subject-object distinctions are made, fall within Peirce's category of Firstness. As a mode of experience this is actually an extra-semiotic state of mind-- *not experienced* until after the fact and felt later as an absence--not being there--or as a oneness, being everywhere/everything. Certain Buddhist meditational practices are specifically designed to bring practitioners to a state of Firstness. Persons who are spirit mediums are in a state of Firstness during possession because they typically indicate that they were not present while the spirit inhabited them—later asking what had been said and done during the ceremony. Moments of Firstness may occur during certain types of musical performances, and in fact may be a goal; long, heightened repetition and going on "automatic pilot" may allow for the temporary disappearance of the self. In Titon's account when he says, "I feel the music enter me and move me. And now the music grows louder, larger until everything else is impossible, shut out. My self disappears," he seems to be describing a movement from Secondness when both he and the music are present to Firstness, when the self disappears. As attractive as this may sound, however, we must recognize that the orchestra or session musician who disappears into Firstness for very long will most likely not be hired back. People perform and listen to music for great many reasons.

A more common and sustainable mode of musical experience is a form of Secondness that results from heightened concentration which enables the melding of the self with a Second-- ones instrument, or the sound, or ones partners--such that all other thoughts, distractions and entities in the world disappear. This state is what Csikszentmihalyi has studied and theorized in detail as *flow* (see Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*) and what Judith Becker calls "deep listening." I, and many musicians I have spoken with, have had the experience of "being in the pocket," "being in the groove," of being in acute Secondness, when,

all of a sudden, someone or something—some surprise--interrupts their concentration on the Second, often leading to symbolic thoughts about the interruption and consequently a stumble or mistake in ones performance.

When playing the short AABB or AABBCC old-time fiddle tunes in our stringband for contra dances I frequently get into a flow, or Secondness, state by playing formulaic variations on a tune that are automatic, or by reacting in habitual ways to the habitual moves of my partners. Secondness is *my* preferred state when playing music. It is what draws me back again and again to playing certain instruments, styles, with certain people, and in certain contexts. The desire for this experience feels like an addiction; as when I miss my morning coffee, I get grouchy when I go too long without it. Csikszentmihalyi describes this addictive quality for flow activities generally.

In theoretical terms what happens when we are playing a contra dance? After teaching the dance, the caller signals that we should begin the tune, sometimes indicating the tempo. The band members focus, tap the tempo together for a moment. Then my son Matt or I play "four potatoes" (a four-beat shuffle formula setting the tempo audibly for the dancers) on the fiddle or banjo and we hit together on the next One. This initial focus on the tempo, felt bodily, and on the starting One puts us in the specific time-frame of the piece. Normal clock time is now irrelevant both in terms of the measurement of time passing (our beats not the second hand) and in terms of the duration we will play. Since the contra dance caller (the person who teaches and guides the figures of the dance) cues the beginning and ending of the dance and can let it go on as long as she wishes, we don't know in advance how long we will play. We know it will be for a good while, but we are freed from having to think about ending it ourselves, so we can just play. Most people in the room are focused on their dancing and the general sound, not specifically on us, and this frees us in another way.

For the most part my attention is on my finger movements on the banjo fretboard— physical habits which are icons resembling the same movements I have made many times in the past (the objects) which indexically generate a physical interpretant—the next moves. At the same time these movement signs are indices co-occurring with the sounds produced; when things are going well, movement and sound correlate exactly providing the immediate feedback that Csikszentmihalyi suggests is a condition facilitating flow. All of this helps me focus my concentration on my hands and the sounds produced as a unity (the First) in relation to the overall sounds of the band (the Second), again facilitating Secondness. Optimally, we are in our own musical time and our own sonic space. Everything else disappears, leading to a feeling of transcending the everyday during and briefly after playing, felt later as happiness or joy. Conversely, mistakes or being out of sync with my band mates—lack of indexical correlations-- knock me out of Secondness.

The AABB tunes are short (each section eight bars in 4/4) and form a repetitive cycle. Both my son and I use old-time or our own tunes as *models* (mental icons) for formulaic variations (icons) as well as improvisations which are typically extensions iconically related to the model and existing formulas. For me, formulaic variations are largely habitual. Tunes we play are variably segmented, "chunked," within sections and a given variation (iconic physical movement + sound) in "slot A" of the tune indexically suggests a physical move (icon) in "slot B" requiring no symbolic thought or decision making. When either Matt or I play formulaic variations the other can respond in a variety of ways: matching it, returning to the basic tune to "hold it down," or playing in counterpoint, but Matt and I have been playing together his whole life, and our responses to each other are also deeply habitual often requiring no symbolic thought or decision

making. For example, here's a studio recording of a tune my son composed that we use for dances. Listen to the third cycle of the tune, I added a slight rhythmic variation in the first half of the A section which he plays off of iconically in the second half--moves that we had not done like this before (*Jane's Birthday*). The best moments are those when Matt makes a move which causes a direct—'unthinking'—sonically complementary effect in my playing. The resulting sound is a sign that creates a deep feeling of connection with my partner (interpretant) all in a state of Secondness only to be reflected on later. When after a dance I ask Matt how he liked it and he responds, "there were definite high points," it is usually these moments he is remembering.

During individual dances, the mental state of Secondness might last for me uninterrupted for five minutes, or sometimes for much of the dance, especially when we play standard old-time tunes that we have been doing for fifteen years. Sometimes, however, I might get bored with what I am playing. This knocks me out of Secondness and in Thirdness I momentarily preplan a new direction for my playing, for example, a new register for a variation or a particular pitch as a goal for an improvisation. My attention also might briefly shift to the dancers, placing my playing and the sound in what Harris Berger calls "the defining background" (*Metal, Rock, and Jazz*, Chapter 5). So within any ten-minute dance, different things move into the foreground and background of my attention shifting my state of experience.

As band leader, Matt pays more attention to the dancers and to conscious decision making. He might verbalize a change in the middle of a tune, either naming another tune to be played in medley, or perhaps he tells the bass and guitar to drop out to change the texture. He feels that such shifts energize the dancers when the bass and guitar re-enter. While for the band leader this is a valid concern, for me words and symbolically conceptualized contrasts get in the way of my preferred flow state; when we do this a lot during performances I chide him that we are "getting too artsy." The point here is that activities that (1) involve a preponderance of icons and indices, (2) require direct and sustained concentration on those signs, and (3) avoid symbolic language and thought will be the activities that best facilitate a Secondness state. Full concentration on iconic and indexical signs silences the "inner language" (or inner "chatter") that is going on in our heads most of the time. "Inner language" is P-symbolic, word-based thought. Judith Becker writes:

> "The inner language is often evaluating past behavior, planning future behavior, and sometimes distressingly caught in a recursive loop that repeats over and over a scenario in which we were deeply hurt or shamed. Some theorists believe inner languaging to be the primary function of language, as an organizer of experience and thus a producer of meaning. No one knows for sure *why we all talk almost constantly, silently to ourselves"* (*Deep Listeners* 28, my emphasis).

Becker states that in trance and deep listening to music, inner language stops. I would add that all activities where full attention is focused on iconic and indexical signs will function to silence "inner language" and thus give us a much needed break from that symbolic part of ourselves.

If I stay in a flow state long enough during a dance or jam, I might have a moment of Firstness—recognized after I come back. This is not a goal for me, however, and awakening from Firstness during a contra dance is disruptive often resulting in symbol-based thoughts like "what was that?"—like waking discombobulated from an absent dream—and I often stumble as a result. Conversely, I remember one Firstness experience while playing in this incredibly long jam session on a beautiful day in a Bloomington, Indiana park--after awaking it felt like pure joy. Sometimes when playing alone in my empty house I have been brought back from Firstness by

auditory hallucinations—voices or noises--which was disturbing and frightening. So, not only can we not reduce musical experience and goals to one type, we can not even generalize the results of a state of Firstness.

It stands to reason that if Firstness states are "empty" then how they are conceptualized and their aftereffects are likely to be strongly influenced by external context and social framing-- as for instance a Zimbabwean medium being possessed by his ancestor, as opposed to a person being filled with the Holy Spirit in a church in Urbana, IL, as opposed to being filled with patriotic fervor after disappearing during repetitive chanting with thousands at a nationalist rally. Firstness experiences of a mundane type—briefly but fully "spacing out"—are probably universal, but most people in the United States are not taught how to do this; typically as school children we are scolded when we do. Yet, this same Firstness state of mind that school children are scolded for is socially sanctioned, encouraged, and directed in a variety of religious traditions around the world that involve what is generally referred to as trance.

Given Judith Becker's broad conceptions of trancing and "deep listening," in her recent book, however, I do not want to make Firstness a synonym for these phenomena anymore than I would suggest that flow is coterminous with Secondness; rather I want to use Peirce's categories to understand such phenomena in clearer terms in relation to specific instances. Becker asks:

> "Can trance events be of different kinds and degrees such as the mild trance of the performer who feels herself to be one with the music she plays, or the trance of the listener whose whole attention becomes focused on the music, or deep possession trance in which one's own self appears to be displaced and one's body is taken over by a deity or a spirit . . ." (*Deep Listeners* 43).

From a Peircean perspective I would guess that the performer "who feels herself" or the listener whose "whole attention becomes focused" are in a state of Secondness whereas the medium she describes is probably in Firstness.

Firstness and Secondness experiences are related in that they both provide a sense of the transcendence of the everyday, and they do not involve P-symbolic thought of "inner language." Moreover, activities that foster Secondness are often a means to achieving Firstness when this is a goal or, as in my case, even when it is not. But Firstness and Secondness differ fundamentally in *the kind* of state of mind involved. Secondness is semiotic limited to icons and indices, Firstness is non-semiotic. Firstness is empty. In Secondness we know full well what the activity is and is about and thus this state of mind is less open to social framing and manipulation; for me it is a more dependable and productive means to transcendence. So in response to Becker's question about different kinds and degrees of what she calls trance, the answer would be yes there are key differences. Peirce's fundamental categories, aided by his sign types, allow us to analyze continuities and compare all types of experiences from mundane "spacing out" to spirit possession; from "being in the pocket" to "deep listening;" and from dancing on automatic pilot to generating symbolic propositions about that activity.

Peircean theory provides an array of conceptual tools to point to, generalize, and partially explain what is happening, moment to moment, during musical and ritual performance. This is all we can ask of a symbolic mode of thought that is directed at the non-symbolic. If we wish to experience Firstness—being--or Secondness--the most direct way of being-in-the-world—rather than theorize about ourselves-in-the world in Thirdness, we should play music and dance. I have always thought, however, that a happy life results from a balanced self that results from balancing these different types of activities, parts of the self, and modes of being. "Inner language" is often

quite useful for figuring things out, but we also need a break from this part of ourselves. Understanding the functions of the different sign types and the nature of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness experience helps me approach a balance in my own life and provides tools to guide my research and my students. This is why Peircean thinking has been fundamental to my ethnomusicological praxis as well as my personal life.

NOTES

1) A version of this paper was originally read at an invited colloquium at the University of Cincinnati, February 11, 2011. I would like to thank Stefan Fiol and his colleagues for the opportunity of presenting these ideas and for their helpful commentary.

2) In Peircean theory, token-type connections involve processes outlined in his first trichotomy, the linking of sinsign (an instance of a sign) to that sign as a general type (legisign). E.g., a given performance of the "Star-Spangled Banner" (sinsign) in relation to the general conception of the piece (legisign).

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