

The Black Indian Ocean: Slavery, Religion, and Identity (1400-1700)

Yale Institute of Sacred Music
organized by Janie Cole

Speakers, Abstracts, and Bios

Omar Ali (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

“Power, Patience, and Perseverance: Malik Ambar’s Practice of صَبْرٌ/*Sabr*”

East Africans and their descendants in South Asia – variously known as *Abyssinians*, *Habshi*, *Kaffir*, *Siddi*, *Sidi*, and *Sheedi*, among other terms – came from a range of spiritual traditions and adopted and created new ones of their own. The life of the Ethiopian Malik Ambar, among the best-known African Diasporic figures of the Indian Ocean world, who was enslaved, taken to Baghdad, adopted Islam, and became a Regent Minister in the western Deccan in the early seventeenth century, offers a way of exploring the dynamics of enslavement, faith, and power in the region during the early modern period. Practicing *sabr*, the term used by Muslims denoting and compelling patience and perseverance in the face of adversity, he would have drawn on the soul-southing sounds of *Qu’ranic* recitation, a form of *dhikr* with its varied, shared, and unique melodies and rhythms, and whispered *alhamdulillah*, as Muslims do to this day. In one intriguing account by the Mughal envoy Mirza Asad Beg near the end of his life, Ambar joined his soldiers in common prayer. Might we view Ambar’s life in this framing of *sabr*? Might this be a way of better understanding how enslaved people drew on their faith to persist and even thrive in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds? Are we imposing a view not of Ambar’s own? Likely, since faith, like the experience of sound, like the intent or habit of *alhamdulillah*, is so personal, so intimate – but may also be performed publicly. The roundtable presentation will offer a brief history of Ambar’s life, the challenges he faced, and his accomplishments framed within this concept and practice of *sabr*.

Omar H. Ali is Professor of Comparative African Diaspora History and Dean of Lloyd International Honors College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The author of *Malik Ambar: Power and Slavery Across the Indian Ocean* and *Islam in the Indian Ocean World*, as well as a co-editor of *Afro-South Asia in the Global African Diaspora*, he wrote the essays for “The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World,” an online exhibit of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of The New York Public Library featured as part of UNESCO’s “International Decade for People of African Descent.” A graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science, he received his Ph.D. in History from Columbia University and was selected as Carnegie Foundation North Carolina Professor of the Year.

Mark Aranha (University of the Witwatersrand, Kukutana Ensemble)

Bronwen Clacherty (University of Cape Town, Kukutana Ensemble)

Tesfamichael Yayeh Hussen (Addis Ababa University, Kukutana Ensemble)

Grasella Luigi (Ethiopian National Theater, Kukutana Ensemble)

Cara Stacey (University of the Witwatersrand, Kukutana Ensemble)

“The Music of *Gabriel’s Odyssey*: Reflecting on Collective Compositional Praxis”

In this paper, we bring together our planned processes for working the music of the interdisciplinary artistic and research production, *Gabriel’s Odyssey*. As a diverse creative team, the musicians who have worked on this production come from India, South Africa, Ethiopia and Tanzania, play a wide range of instruments, and bring a variety of musical interests and approaches to this project. In this presentation, we reflect on the particular creative and research processes that have informed earlier iterations of this work and how we hope the ensemble compositions will be shaped going forward. Our work with *Gabriel’s Odyssey* resonates with Tim Ingold’s idea of transformational knowledge-making (2013), as well as Diana Taylor’s conception of performance as a way for us to “reimagine and restage the social rules, codes, and conventions that prove most oppressive and damaging” (2016, xiv). In creating music which supports the telling of such an extraordinary tale of survival, invention and slavery, reflection on our aims, processes, successes and failures is key and we acknowledge this whole endeavour as emergent and ongoing. Collective and evolving composition rooted in historical research has not been addressed substantially in artistic research scholarship or elsewhere. In our work, we aim to contribute to discourse on how music can tell stories that contribute to historical imagining, how the tensions between historical research and musical creativity can be productive, and how reflexive compositional praxis is important when addressing stories of slavery and historical injustice.

Mark Aranha is an Indian musician and PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His ongoing research on the melodies of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar continues from his MMus (2021) work on Jewish and Mappila histories and song traditions in Kerala, studied in the context of precolonial transoceanic migrations and networks of exchange. He has presented his work at major musicology and ethnology conferences and lectured at universities in India and Taiwan. Beyond academia, Mark also has over a decade of experience working across geographic and stylistic boundaries as a composer, sideman and producer with musical artists such as Sumangala Damodaran (IN), Susmit Sen (IN), Thandeka Mfinyongo (RSA), Lindokuhle Matina (RSA), Cara Stacey (RSA), Bianca Love (USA), and many others. His research and musical practice come together in original productions such as *Ife and Bilal* (2018), *Gabriel’s Odyssey* (2021), and *Rebecca: Oru Kochini Kadhapadaal* (2022).

Bronwen Clacherty is a lecturer in African Music at the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town. Bronwen has a Bachelor of Music from the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town and a Masters in Community and Participatory Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London. She completed her PhD in 2021 through the South African College of Music and the Re-Centring AfroAsia project, University of Cape Town. Her

doctoral and current research investigates Zanzibari women's history, drawing on oral history, particularly songs and stories. Bronwen's work also explores performance and creative work as an output for research studies. Bronwen is a performing musician and composer and has worked with various ensembles such as Orchestras, Chamber music ensembles, Musical Theatre, performance art pieces and experimental theatre productions.

Tesfamichael Yayeh Hussen is a graduate assistant at Addis Ababa University's Performing and Visual Arts College and the Yared School of Music. He was a music teacher for six years at the Entoto Polytechnic College Music Department. He is a master musician of indigenous Ethiopian instruments and has wide performance experience working with the Ethiopian children and youth theater houses in live stage performances, trio groups, the Yared School of Music orchestra, and various traditional Ethiopian bands.

Grasella Luigi is an Ethiopian violinist and singer. She holds a BA degree in Music from Addis Ababa University's Yared School of Music and is currently a Masters candidate in Arts of Music at the same institution. From 2008 to 2013, she worked as a music teacher at international schools, and since 2014 she has been working as a violin player and a band leader of a string orchestra at the Ethiopian National Theatre.

Cara Stacey is a South African musician, composer and musicologist based in Johannesburg. She is a pianist and plays the umrhubhe, uhadi, and makhoyane musical bows. She holds a doctorate in African music, specifically looking at the makhoyane musical bow from eSwatini (University of Cape Town/SOAS). Cara has performed across southern Africa, in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Peru, the USA and Switzerland with the likes of Shabaka Hutchings, Sarathy Korwar, Dan Leavers, Galina Juritz, Beat Keller, Matchume Zango, Jason Singh and Juliana Venter. She sits on the executive committee for the South African Society for Research in Music and is the International Council for Traditionals of Music and Dance country liaison office for Eswatini. She is lecturer in Creative Music Technologies at Wits University.

Ananya Chakravarti (Georgetown University)

“Contextualizing Gabriel: Africans in Early Modern South Asia”

While Gabriel's story is a deeply poignant reminder of the complicated loves and lives of African peoples enslaved in South Asia, it does raise important questions about how we characterize and think about the long history of Africans in the subcontinent. Gabriel stands in stark contrast to the image of elite military slavery that has dominated the historiography, which in turn is dependent upon Persian sources. Using sources from the Portuguese archives, this paper will argue that the Portuguese intrusion into Indian Ocean slaving created very different conditions for Africans in the subcontinent and points us to the need to rethink our understanding of Afro-Asian histories as a result.

Ananya Chakravarti is associate professor of history at Georgetown University. Her book, *The Empire of Apostles: Religion, Accommodatio and the Imagination of Empire in Early Modern Brazil and*

India (Oxford, 2018) received an honorable mention from the Association of Asian Studies' Bernard Cohn Prize awarded to the best first book on South Asia. She is currently working on a history of the west coast of India, *The Konkan: Space, Identity and History on an Indian Ocean Coast*, as well as a textbook on modern South Asia.

Janie Cole (Yale University)

Dr. Janie Cole (PhD University of London) is a Research Scholar at Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music and Visiting Professor in Yale's Department of Music, an affiliate of the Yale Council on African Studies, Research Officer for East Africa on the University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town's interdisciplinary project [Re-Centring AfroAsia](#) (2018-), and a Research Associate at Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (2022-). In 2024, she will join the University of Connecticut's Department of Music as an assistant professor of musicology. Prior to this, she was a Senior Lecturer (adjunct) at the University of Cape Town's South African College of Music for nine years (2015-23).

Janie's specialty research areas are three-fold, focusing on musical practices, instruments and thought in early modern African kingdoms and Afro-Eurasian encounters, transcultural circulation and entanglements in the age of exploration; the intersection of music, consumption and production, politics, patronage and gender in late Renaissance and early Baroque Italy and France; and music and the anti-apartheid struggle in 20th-century South Africa and musical constructions of Blackness, apartheid struggle movement politics, violence, resistance, trauma, and social change. Her current work centers on early modern musical culture at the royal court in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and intertwined sonic histories of entanglement with the Latin Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean world.

She is the author of two books, [A Muse of Music in Early Baroque Florence: the Poetry of Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane](#) (Olschki, 2007) and [Music, Spectacle and Cultural Brokerage in Early Modern Italy: Michelangelo Buonarroti il Giovane](#), 2 vols. (Olschki, 2011), as well as numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters.

She has been granted fellowships from The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at Villa I Tatti (2005-6), the Newberry Library (2008), the Medici Archive Project (2002-5), won research grants from The Getty Foundation (2007-9), The Leverhulme Trust (1996-98), and The Italian Cultural Institute (1995-96), and been awarded the Stephen Arlen Award from English National Opera (1995), the Janet Levy Prize from the American Musicological Society (2010), the Author Grant Award from the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association of South Africa (2015), and the Claude V. Palisca Fellowship Award in Musicology from the Renaissance Society of America (2020). She served as Council Member of the Renaissance Society of America as Discipline Representative in Music (2015-17) and is currently the [founding Discipline Representative in Africana Studies](#) (2018-) at RSA and on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Renaissance Quarterly*. She is the co-founder of the International Musicological Society Study Group [Early African Sound Worlds](#), founder of the Afro-Asian

[Kukutana Ensemble](#), and co-organized the landmark international conference on [Music in Africa and its diffusion in the early modern world \(1300-1650\)](#) at Tours University's Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance (2022). She is building the [Malibongwe Women's Archive](#) of women's struggle testimonies and music from apartheid prisons in collaboration with University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections funded by the Schlettwein Foundation, and co-directing the film [We Are Not Afraid: Music and Resistance in Apartheid Prisons](#) (to be released 2024). She is the founder/executive director of [Music Beyond Borders](#), a platform for public musicology and engaged scholarship.

Sumangala Damodaran (University of Washington, Seattle)

"Afroasian Musical Routes: History, Memory and Emotion in the Performance of Musical Traditions"

There is now a large and burgeoning scholarship around precolonial AfroAsian connections and how such long-term links have strong links with how societies have emerged and the resultant cultural formations within them. If we turn to music and associated performance forms, similarities and various traces of such longue duree interactions can be observed that allow us to uncover historical connections between parts of the two continents in ways that have not been pointed out before. Using examples from research done in a multi-country and multi-institution project titled 'Recentring Afroasia – Musical and Human Migrations, 700-1500 AD, between 2016 and 2021, this paper will look at how musical 'traditions' in different parts of the AfroAsian landscape have been shaped by such interactions and the migrations. It will also point out the role of historical memory and emotional registers in the performance of several traditions on the two continents.

Sumangala Damodaran is an academician and musician, whose experience spans teaching and research in Economics, Development Studies and Popular Music Studies. She has taught in Delhi University and Ambedkar University Delhi in India over a period of three decades and is presently Director, Gender and Economics with the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs) and Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Washington at Seattle. Apart from her academic involvements as an economist and social scientist, she is also a singer and composer. Her archiving and documentation of the musical tradition of the Indian People's Theatre Association from the 1940s and 1950s has resulted in a book titled "The Radical Impulse: Music in the Tradition of the IPTA" and an album titled 'Songs of Protest' and she has performed from the documented repertoire extensively in different parts of the world. She has collaborated with poets and musicians from South Africa as a founder member of the award-winning Insurrections Ensemble, which has produced six music albums and has also directed a multi-institutional project around Music and Migration in Precolonial Afro-Asia from 2016 until the present, which has resulted in two musical productions and a book titled 'Maps of Sorrow' (2023).

Jazmin Graves Eyssalenne (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

“Devotional Poetry and Diasporic Perspectives in the Sidi (African-Indian) Sufi Tradition of Gujarat”

The Sufi devotional tradition of Muslim Sidis, Indians of East African ancestry, centers on the veneration of African Rifai Sufi saints who lived in fourteenth-century Gujarat in western India. The Sidi Sufi tradition, with its devotional song-dance performance known as Sidi *dhammal* or *goma*, has preserved East African lexical items, musical instruments, and spiritual healing modalities in western India over the centuries. These tangible and intangible elements of African cultural heritage have transformed as they have become enrooted in the multivalent religio-cultural landscape of western India. This paper examines three Sidi devotional songs, especially those with distinctive Swahili words and lyrics, to investigate how East Africans in diaspora in Gujarat interpreted the enshrined presence and appealed to the spiritual power of African Sufi saints entombed in the land of dispersal. These songs preserve the lamentations of the displaced and exhortations for the kinless and childless to seek the saints’ intercessory aid. Analysis of these devotional songs, considered in tandem with the material culture and ritual practices of the contemporary Sidi Sufi devotional tradition, outlines a narrative of the lived experiences of East Africans who arrived in Gujarat in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries largely via Indian Ocean networks of trade in enslaved captives. This paper’s analysis of the songs, materiality and rituals of the Sidi Sufi devotional tradition highlights the parallel processes of preservation and transformation of East African musico-spiritual technologies in diaspora in western India.

Dr. Jazmin Graves Eyssallenne is Assistant Professor in the African American and African Diaspora Studies Program and Lloyd Honors College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Jazmin received her Ph.D. from the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago in 2021. Jazmin’s research centers on the Sufi devotional tradition of Muslim Sidis, Indians of African ancestry, of Gujarat and Mumbai. Her broader research interests include Islamic, particularly Sufi, traditions and literatures of India, the African diaspora in South Asia, and African diasporic religions of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds. Jazmin’s research has been published in several edited volumes and journals, including *Wonder in South Asia* (2023) and *The Routledge Handbook on Islam in Asia* (2022). Jazmin co-edited the three-volume publication, *Afro-South Asia in the Global African Diaspora* (2020). In 2018, Jazmin was named one of the MIPAD Global Top 100 Most Influential People of African Descent Under 40 for her service project, the Ahmedabad Sidi Heritage and Educational Initiative.

Neelima Jeychandran (Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar)

“African Saints and Interwoven Media: Performing the Black Histories of the Indian Ocean”

Maritime networks of the Indian Ocean have connected the littoral spaces of Africa, Arabia, and Asia through centuries-long circulations of material goods and movements of people, both free and forced. This paper expands the spatial and epistemological limits of the Black Indian Ocean by looking at the interwoven media arts and ritual performances of the African descent communities in western India. First, I look at the arrival of African saints to India in premodern

times and their entangled histories with pre-colonial empires and the Indian Ocean slave trade. Trade items like textiles and beads associated with these Black saints connect them to terrains of exchange in Misr (Egypt), Al-Habash (Ethiopia), and Nubia (Sudan and Nile Valley) regions, all important nodes that linked west Africa and the Indian Ocean through complex trans-Saharan networks of traders, pilgrims, and enslaved peoples. I then describe how Sidi African-Indian community members recount the migration of these saints through rituals and soundscapes and reflect upon their histories and deep-rooted connection to the African and Black Indian Ocean worlds with or without direct contacts and journeys. The central objective is to address how Black oceanic spaces (i.e., of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic) are connected not just historically, but across multiple realms – material, performative, visual, ritualistic, and symbolic.

Neelima Jeychandran is an Assistant Professor of African Visual Culture in the Department of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar. She is an ethnographer, editor, and scholar who works on oceanic crossovers and material histories of West and East Africa and western India. She is co-editor of the book *Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds* (Routledge, 2020) and the co-editor of the *Verge* journal issue on “Indian Ocean Studies, African-Asian Affinities” (2022), and the series co-editor of the Routledge Indian Ocean and Trans-Asia book series. Jeychandran is currently finishing her book *Textured Pasts: Material Heritage and African-Indian Exchanges*, in which she brings together the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean worlds into relational consideration by looking at the material and immaterial circuits of exchanges. During her tenure at Penn State, she co-convoked the research initiative *Indian Oceanologies* with funding from the Humanities Institute at Penn State and the Humanities Without Walls consortium.

Pedro Machado (Indiana University)

“Experiencing Enslavement and the Slave Trades of the Indian Ocean”

Enslavement as a process was complex and multilayered, often encompassing experiences of dislocation and displacement, as individuals were taken from their homes to destinations that could be thousands of miles away. This presentation considers the range of experiences that both African and Asian slaves endured in the Indian Ocean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during periods of intensified exchange of captives between the interiors, coasts and islands scattered across the ocean. While the moment of capture or bondage signaled the beginning of a new unfree state and social position, the experience of enslavement did not necessarily end in that moment; rather, it initiated a process whose trajectories could be expansive and involve multiple stages (and geographies) that shaped the contours of an unfree existence in the ocean undergirded by complex financial and mercantile structures.

Pedro Machado is a global and Indian Ocean historian with interests in commodity histories, enslavement, labour and migratory movements, and the social, cultural, environmental and commercial trajectories of objects. He is based at Indiana University, Bloomington, and is the author of several works, among which are *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); *Textile Trades, Consumer Cultures and the Material Worlds of the Indian Ocean* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); and *Pearls*,

People and Power: Pearling and Indian Ocean Worlds (Ohio University Press, 2020). He is currently at work on a global history of pearl shell collection and exchange while also developing research on eucalyptus and colonial forestry in the Portuguese empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Matteo Salvatore (American University of Sharjah)

“The Many Identities of Gabriel, a Beta Israel in the Indian Ocean World”

This paper discusses the life of Gabriel, a Beta Israel child enslaved in mid-sixteenth-century Ethiopia, who lived in the Arab world, the Sultanate of Ahmednager, and Portuguese India, where he came to the attention of the Goa Inquisition as a relapsed Muslim. His story of mobility, persecution, and resistance offers rare vistas into the slave trade in the early modern western Indian Ocean World.

Matteo Salvatore is Associate Professor of History. After receiving his doctorate from Temple University in Philadelphia, he taught in colleges in the US, Kuwait, and joined the American University of Sharjah in 2016. He is a broadly trained world historian with a research interest in the Horn of Africa and its diaspora. His first monograph, *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European Relations, 1402-1555*, explores early modern dealings between the Kingdom of Ethiopia and Renaissance Europe. He recently co-authored a monograph on the 16th century Ethiopian intellectual Täsfa Səyon, currently under review. Matteo has received funding from the American Philosophical Society, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, and in 2023 he was Berenson Fellow at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, where he worked on his book-length study of the 17th century Ethiopian traveler Şägga Krəstos.

Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London)

“Embodied Heritage of an Afro-diasporic Community in Sri Lanka”

In multi-ethnic pluricultural Sri Lanka, an island at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean, a community of Afrodescendants living in a village called Sirambiyadiya play out slavery and the slave trade. Whilst slavery existed under diverse systems and were known by local names, the availability of colonial records testify to the forced dispersal of millions of Africans. Historical archives and colonial narratives indicate multiple points of embarkation for enslaved Africans transported to Sri Lanka. Absent from the colonial archives are ethnolinguistic details of the enslaved Africans and also a song-dance tradition called *manja*, which the community in Sirambiyadiya uphold as their only heritage. Whilst being devout Roman Catholics playing significant roles in the construction, service and rituals of the Church, the community has simultaneously maintained an African tradition associated with spirits and healing rituals. Composing songs in the newly acquired creolised Portuguese and acknowledging Catholic Saints is a measure of their devotion to Catholicism. On the other hand, KiSwahili lyrics in *manja* reveal their African roots and trans-Indian Oceanic routes of migration. How does the community navigate two cultural worlds? Could we describe *manja* as Syncretism? *Manja*

simultaneously brings out the Africanness of the community through its Call-and-Response form of singing. Their collective cultural memories and embodied heritage play out their alterity using their cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) enabling them to negotiate a space in the multiethnic tapestry of Sri Lanka. Intergenerational knowledge transfer of embodied dance and music is the centripetal force in maintaining Afro-Sri Lankan group solidarity. This raises more questions: Why does culture survive on the margins of society? The community creates Africa through cultural production (Bourdieu 1984, 2010) and offers a broader kaleidoscopic view of cultural transmission within the rubric of colonialism and the Indian Ocean slave trade.

Professor Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, FRAS, a Senior Associate (Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge), a Senior Research Fellow (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London), a Collaborative Researcher (University of Colombo). She was a Visiting Professor (Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan) and a Visiting Fellow (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam). She is a winner of the Rama Watamull Collaborative Lecture Series award from the Center for South Asian Studies & Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity Award (University of Hawaii). Her research explores migration, commerce and cultural exchange in the Indian Ocean; African, Malay and Portuguese diasporas within a historical, linguistic and ethnomusicological frame. Among her book publications are *African Identity in Asia*, *African Diaspora in Asian Trade Routes and Cultural Memories*, *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean*, *Uncovering the History of Africans in Asia*, *Portuguese in the East* and *Music of Afro-Asians*. She has also produced four ethnographic films on Indian Ocean communities and cultures.

Kristy Stone (University of the Western Cape, Kukutana Ensemble)

Conor Ralphs (Independent Artist-Researcher, Kukutana Ensemble)

“Towards an Indian Ocean Aesthetic: Transoceanic Narratives and Creative Praxis”

This paper introduces a theoretical and methodological framework for what we term an “Indian Ocean aesthetic” which draws on the ontological turns of New Materialism and Black Studies and the growing field of Indian Ocean Studies. This inquiry underpins the visual language we are developing in relation to the archival and scripted material of the *Gabriel's Odyssey* production and, specifically, the questions of representation it elicits.

In its broadest sense, an Indian Ocean aesthetic, can be defined as a mode of inquiry or transformative heuristic for creative visual praxis that responds to difficult historical moments, including the haunted history of slavery and colonisation carried by oceans. While much oceanic theory arises from Black studies of the Atlantic Slave Trade, researchers in the South have begun to consider the Indian Ocean as distinct and rich with material. By recognizing the vast and ancient system of trade and cultural networks, the extensive aesthetic traditions of Africa and Asia, Indian Ocean Studies has emerged as a way of theorising the decolonial. Within this framework, “the sonic” represents an emergent motif, challenging the ocular-centric dominance of Western art history. Investigating the potentialities of objects as “sonic forces” within historical accounts enhances our understanding of the past and offers a unique perspective for visual artistic expression in collaboration with musicians. Further, by advocating for a

"perceptual culture" inspired by Sufi aesthetics, the paper encourages engagement with sound, touch, taste, scent, dreams, and discourses of generosity and nourishment (Shaw, 2019). Integrating "Black geographies of freedom" (McKittrick, 2006) and concepts of "fugitivity" (see Moten & Harney, 2013, Sharpe, 2016, King, 2019), the Indian Ocean as method further embraces transdisciplinary methodologies rooted in nonlinearity, contradictory histories, diverse real and imagined landscapes. Emphasising the importance of disordered and the improvised, the paper elevates the *wildness beyond* traditional narratives of the past and its literal representations (Halberstrom, 2013).

Kristy Stone (researcher, teacher, artist) is a practicing artist and PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of the Western Cape. From 2016-2020 she was an A.W. Mellon Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Humanities Research (UWC). Her thesis is titled, *Affect and art: Encounters with objects of power in South African museum and archival collections*. Kristy has a background in Fine Art (BA Hons.), Education and Heritage Studies (MA) from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Conor Ralphs (artist, curator, designer) received training in Fine Arts at the Michaelis School of Art in Cape Town and Masters degree in Art Historical Studies from the University of Cape Town. His work is multi-disciplinary in nature, including painting, photography, interactive installations and research-based interventions. He has exhibited in South Africa, Spain, Germany and Madagascar, exploring the intersection of migration and astronomy. He is the cofounder of the Africa|Nosy Art Exchange (ANAE) developed in Madagascar which seeks to encourage the interaction of artists and the exchange of ideas with the islands surrounding Africa.

Chairs:

Ilana Webster-Kogen (Yale University)

Nancy Um (Getty Research Institute)

Jazmin Graves Eyssalenne (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)