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REACH BACK, REACH DEEP, REACH OUT — A CASE HISTORY OF THE SONGS OF MEMORY PROJECT IN THE COMMUNITY

Abstract

The Songs of Memory project originally grew from a desire to preserve, through film, the ancestral music of the traditional highland peoples of Southeast Asia. By capturing age-old ceremonies that trace the arc of life, from birth to death, a documentary film would demonstrate the primal importance of vocal and instrumental music, as it shapes and supports those communities that continue to practice oral tradition, live close to the earth, and believe in animism.

As music plays such a vital role in marking the daily, seasonal, life, and generational cycles of a society, it is impossible to isolate it from other aspects of people's lives. With this in mind, I resolved to expand my original undertaking, in order to place the soundscape of these communities into a larger context. So what began in 2005 as a one-hour film transformed into the creation of distinct, independent media that, when woven together, form an interdisciplinary whole. In this way, it is hoped that the Songs of Memory archival project provides a deeper, truer, more meaningful experience than any single medium could offer.

Keywords

Southeast Asia, project review, documentation, music production, community participation

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violinist, obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and her master's degree from DePaul University in Chicago. While performing in classical orchestras, she also taught young people through the Suzuki method which is based on the principles of "oral tradition."

While holding teaching positions in the US, France and England, and teaching at international conferences in Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pan Pacific, she was exposed to foreign cultures that piqued her interest. Her graduate work in documenting music took Victoria to Morocco and inspired her to seek other cultures to work with. This brought her in 2005 to Southeast Asia, choosing Chiang Mai as her base.

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