

# About Charles Keil

NAKAGAWA Shin ;

Charles Keil, as mentioned in the reasons for his receiving this prize, has put untiring efforts into firmly establishing new fields that may be unfamiliar to many ears such as applied sociomusicology, 'echology' and 'groovology', and he has made many great contributions in the development of experimental ethnomusicology. In applying various findings from analysis based on his field work to children's education (applied sociomusicology), and particularly in stressing physicality based on the concept of "resonating with the world", he has espoused the importance of the study of 'grooves' (groovology), and of 'echology' where he maintains that echology is a part of cultural ecology in the broader sense. He has not simply sat still while advocating this, but has thoroughly mastered a variety of Latin American and African percussion styles, and has helped children and their parents to experience grooves while he himself performs together with them on percussion instruments, enthusiastically working to publicly share his theories by utilizing practical methods. In this sense of "practicing what he preaches", he can be characterized as an outstanding cultural activist.

Keil has many published works, among which the most important ones are *Urban Blues* (1966), *Tiv Song* (1979), *Polka Happiness* (1992), *Music Grooves* (1994), and *Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia* (2002). In *Urban Blues*, he has dealt in a fresh and vivid way with the unique musical culture of African-Americans using as materials radio broadcasts, interviews with and performances by B.B. King. The participation-observation method of inquiry, gradually becoming a cultural insider, subsequently became his basic research approach. *Tiv Song* is an ethnological monograph on the music of the Tiv tribe of Nigeria which mainly consists of his descriptions

of songs used against death and evil spirits. According to Keil, he still is unable to write easily about Nigeria's war against Biafra, without getting a lump in his throat when he thinks about it. *Polka Happiness* is the first book on the dance music of working class Polish-Americans. He discusses it as a secular ritual meant to satisfy the will of the group 'to party.' The concepts he uses here of 'participatory consciousness' and 'participatory discrepancies' he later developed into 'groovology' as a joyous science. In *Music Grooves* (dialogues with Steven Feld) he confirms that 'participatory consciousness' is the mechanism that seeks to restore human solidarity and the 'echological' relation that humans have with nature. In *Bright Balkan Morning* he moves from an ethnological methodology to a method of multi-layered description (of history, culture, oral history, soundscapes, etc.) to discuss the healing power of music and dance in a region of frequent ethnic conflicts.

One characteristic of Charles Keil's work that can be cited is that he often works on joint projects with others. *Music Grooves* was the fruit of dialogues (and juxtaposed articles) over a period of 25 years with Steven Feld, the winner of the 15<sup>th</sup> Fumio Koizumi Music Prize. Feld, and many other people as well, were involved in the documentation of *Bright Balkan Morning*. This emphasis on collaborative work is not unrelated to his own original thought, particularly his 'echology.' His grand compilation is *Born to Groove* (2011), jointly written with Patricia Campbell "and friends,"-- first published on the Web. This is an application of his findings, over many years in ethnomusicology, to the creative development of musicality and "primary communication" in children. In this book he reveals his fears that in the process of being educated to become adults, children will lose the pleasure of resonating in tune with Nature and lose the deep joy made possible by synchronized movement and team activities. He describes how practice in 'groove' activities such as singing, dancing, drumming, and drama are effective in restoring our connections to Nature and society. He also focuses his attention on Japanese performance

practices which recognize that spirits dwell in the myriad phenomena of Nature and in the grooving practices that promote friendly relations and ever deeper connections between sentient beings.

In all these ways, to sum up, we humans are seeking through performance the relationships between one's body, our bodies "keeping together in time", and the universe (the world) from the viewpoint of the groove. I think that his research activities, which work towards socialization from his own practice together with children, have a breadth and a potential that transcends the disciplines of 'ethnology' and 'musicology'.

(Professor, Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University)

## **Biographical Note of Dr. Charles M.H. Keil**

1939	Born Norwalk, Connecticut, USA
1961	B.A. Yale University, American Studies
1964	M.A. University of Chicago, Anthropology
1979	Ph.D. University of Chicago, Anthropology
1968 - 1970	Henry Adams Fellow, American Studies, SUNY at Buffalo
1970 - 1971	Assistant Professor, American Studies, SUNY at Buffalo
1971 - 1983	Associate Professor, American Studies, SUNY at Buffalo
1982 and 1983	Visiting Professor, University of Trent, Ontario, Canada
1983 - 2000	Professor, American Studies, SUNY at Buffalo

1993	Visiting Professor, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa
2000 -	Professor Emeritus, SUNY at Buffalo

## **Main Works of Dr. Charles M.H. Keil**

### **Books**

*POLKA THEORY: Perspectives on the Will to Party*, Univ. of Chicago Press (contracted for)

*BORN TO GROOVE* (in press 2011)

*BRIGHT BALKAN MORNING: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia*, Wesleyan University Press (2002)

*MUSIC GROOVES: Essays and Dialogues with Steve Feld*, University of Chicago Press, (1994)

*MY MUSIC*, edited with S. Crafts and D.Cavicchi, Wesleyan University Press, (1993)

*POLKA HAPPINESS*, with A. Keil and R. Blau, Temple University Press, (1992), paperback 1996

*TIV SONG: The Sociology of Art in a Classless Society*, Univ. of Chicago Press, (1979)

*URBAN BLUES*, University of Chicago Press, 1966; paperback 1968, 2nd Ed. new Afterword, (1992)

### **Articles in Journals**

"Skills for Children's Liberation" *FOLKLORE FORUM* 34/1-2 (2003)

"They Want the Music But They Don't Want the People" *CITY & SOCIETY* 14/1 (2002)

"The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report"

*ETHNOMUSICOLOGY* 39/1 (Winter 1995)

"'Ethnic' music traditions in USA (black music; country; others; all)",

*POPULAR MUSIC* 13/2 (1994)

"Sociomusicology: A Participatory Approach" *ECHOLOGY* #2 1988

"Participatory Discrepancies and the Power of Music" in *CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY*, 2/3 (1987)

"People's Music Comparatively: Style and Stereotype, Class and Hegemony," in *DIALECTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY* X (1985)

"Motion and Feeling through Music" in *JR. OF AESTHETICS AND ART CRITICISM* (1966)

## Poetry

MASKANDA MOMENTS (1993)

HATTO POTATO & CARACAS MARACAS (2009)

OWED TO RODOLFO (in press for 2011)

## Music

GIVE PEACE SOME CHANTS (2009), New York Path to Peace, co-produced with Allen Farmelo

Current bands: Berkshire Stompers, New York Path to Peace, Biocentrics

Bands started in Buffalo that continue: Outer Circle Orchestra, 12/8 Path Band

## Critical Appraisals

["Up From Darien" by Robert Christgau](#)

"Charlie Grooves" by Steven Feld in *City & Society*, Vol. XIV, no. 1, pages 59-67.

## **Community Activities**

Founder, Board of Directors, Musicians United for Superior Education, Inc. 1990 – 2000

Co-founder, Jubilation Foundation, 2009

## **Web Activity**

[Truth And Traditions Party](#)

[the BERKSHIRE STOMPERS](#)

[Peace & Poetree Party](#)

[The 12/8 Path](#)

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[MUSE \(Musicians United for Superior Education, Inc.\)](#)

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