

## **ISP B10: Sounds of the City**

Fall 2011

Writing Assignment #1: Describing A Performance

Due date: Thursday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>

This assignment is a continuation of the in-class exercise we did in Week 1, in which we listened to and watched excerpts of the Brooklyn rhythm band Natural Expression performing their version of the soca hit, "Palance." In preparation for this assignment, review the video. Our focus is on the section of the video from 3:25-6:00:

"Natural Expression, Brooklyn Street Party 2010"  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPy9\\_JCPGyg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPy9_JCPGyg)

### **Assignment:**

Write a summary essay about your group discussion of the writing exercise in Week 1. Refer back to parts 1, 2, and 3 of the exercise. What things did you notice about the performance? How did this compare with the observations of your group members? Why do you think members of the class noticed different things? What else do you notice about the performance, now that you are watching it yet again? Considering what you now know about ethnography, what else do you think is worth exploring regarding the social and historical context of the performance? Your essay should be between 2 and 3 pages of typed, double-spaced pages.

***\*Scroll down to the next page to see the in-class description exercise***

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In-class exercise

### Considering a live performance

Witnessing music in live performance adds an entirely new dimension to our appreciation. What previously we only heard (and perhaps imagined), we now *see* as well. In performance, *we watch music being created*. Moreover, while recorded music (and particularly listening with headphones) have made music listening a private, individual experience, live performance returns music to its original, *communal* context. When we go to or watch a performance, we not only respond to the performer(s), but also to the audience members around us and the space where the performance takes place.

**PART ONE:** First listen to the first two minutes of the piece. As you listen, close your eyes and try to imagine the performance. When your professor stops the music, take a few minutes to write about what you expect the performance will look like. You might consider some of the following questions: What do(es) the artist(s) look like? How many are there? What instruments are they playing? How are they dressed? How do they behave as they perform? Are they sitting or standing? What is the space like in which they are performing? Is the audience visible, and if so, how do they behave?

When you have finished your “preview,” circulate your writing through your group. What similarities or differences do you find in your group’s perceptions about how the performance will appear?

**PART TWO:** Together with your group members, watch the performance. After the performance is finished, write answers to the following questions. As you watch the performance, write down 2-3 *details* in response to each of the following:

1. The physical appearance of the performer(s), *excluding dress, but including facial expressions*.
2. The way the performer(s) is/are dressed.
3. The way the performer(s) behave(s) (body language).
4. The instrument(s) on which the music is being performed.
5. What the performance space looks like.
6. How the audience behaves during the performance (if they are visible).

When the performance has finished, trade details with your group. What similarities and differences do you find? What things did you notice that your fellow group members also noticed? Was there anything you noticed that no one else did?

**PART THREE:** When you have finished sharing information, you will watch the performance a second time. This time, think about the social and historical context of the performance. Who are these musicians? Where did they come from? What sorts of questions would you like to know about them? What sorts of things would you like to know about the audience? What kind of history would you like to know about the setting (e.g. the street, neighborhood, borough, city)?