

otherwise is unnatural, artificial, contrary to nature' (1968: 107). His discussions of the difference between 'natural kinship' and 'in-laws' and between 'American born' and 'naturalized' citizens, parallels the distinction between talent and 'mere technique.' Musical genius, feeling, and talent are somehow innate, in the blood (and therefore justified), the others are learned through self-discipline, training, and (in the case of citizenship) legislation.

Composers are often said to possess a special kind of genius. The introduction of new music is the result of individual experience among the Suyá and the result of a genetic lottery among Americans. Yet in both groups musical innovation is broadly 'natural' or beyond the control of the individual involved. For the Americans music is the result of the genes; for the Suyá it is the result of a witch. One society's individual gift is another society's individual evil trans-formed into a benefit.

All of these ideas may be contrasted with the North American Plains Indian vision quest. There, an individual purposefully sought a vision through isolation and fasting. The visions experienced were somewhat similar to those described by the Suyá (Native American cosmologies have many broad themes in common), but meant something quite different. A Plains Indian who saw a vision was a complete adult with powerful spirit. In a similar pattern, shamans in many of the Tupi-speaking groups in Brazil sought spiritual journeys and were often political leaders as well. A Suyá who lost his spirit, on the other hand, was less complete than adults who had them. He would almost never become a political leader, and the fate of his spirit after his physical death was quite uncertain – many people said that his spirit would never join its relatives in the village of the dead when the body died.

Music, in a great many places, is said to come from beyond the mind and beyond the body – from the natural order as it is differently conceived by different peoples. This gives music a pre-ordained, transcendent, and often unquestionable reality. The following chapter will describe how singing is part of the construction of the Suyá world, and thus part of the creation of certain social, spatial, and personal processes, forms, and ideals.

## 4 *Singing as a creative activity*

In two preceding chapters we have investigated the distinctive features of musical form and the transcendent origins of Suyá songs. But music is more than sound and cosmology. It is performed by members of a community in certain places and at certain times, often with an audience composed of other members of the community. Music is the entire process of conceptualization, realization, and evaluation of music. Each performance re-creates, re-establishes, or alters the significance of singing and also of the persons, times, places, and audiences involved. It expresses the status, sex, and feelings of the performers, and it brings these to the attention of the entire community, which interprets them in a variety of ways. The Suyá village can be likened to a concert hall, its annual round equated with a concert series, and its population equated with an orchestra. I will investigate these analogies by discussing musical space, musical time, and the social relations involved in musical production. Then I will describe the musical expression of individual identity, and the kinds of choices a singer might make during his performance. Finally, I will summarize some of the recent work on the ethnography of musical performance which provides a methodology for the study of music and performance genres more generally. Above all, this chapter focuses on what singing does for the individual, the social relationships he or she establishes, and the community as a whole. Far too few descriptions of musical traditions consider the broad social and symbolic contexts of which music is a part. By situating singing in socially defined space and time, this chapter presents the sounds discussed in the previous chapters in their social framework.

### The village as a concert hall: the sonic re-creation of spatial relationships

The Suyá village resembled many others in lowland South America: it was small and sounds traveled easily within it. Native communities in the tropical regions of South America typically consist of small populations living fairly densely packed in a single house or in villages separated from one another by large stretches of gardens and uninhabited forest used for hunting and gathering. Populations of less than one hundred are common today, and even in the past settlements of over one thousand were quite rare. Although there are exceptions, the village is usually the most important social and political unit. Communities were (and in some cases still are) composed of a single large house (the Northwest Amazon region, Yanomami, some Tupi groups), or a circle of houses (the Gé-speaking groups, the Upper Xingu, some Tupi-speaking groups). Probably the best description of the space and time of everyday life is to be found in Gregor's description of the Mehinaku (1977). In these small communities, sounds made in one part of the settlement can often be heard by all of its members. With its circle of thatched houses around the cleared plaza, the Suyá village resembled a theatre in the round (see Figure 4.1 and Illustration 1). Orators circling the plaza,

child announced a birth to the entire community, a shout indicated a successful hunt, the wailing of a mourner might indicate a death. Lying in their hammocks the Suyá had a pretty good idea what was happening in their village. As a consequence, things that were not supposed to be public were virtually always silently undertaken. Silence was characteristic of anger, of lovers, and of witches. While noise was characteristic of the public, the collective, and the euphoric, silence was the mark of strong but socially disruptive emotions. When sounds were to be heard, what they were and where they originated were essential features for their interpretation.

The villages of the Gê-speaking communities in Brazil are famous in the ethnographic literature for the clarity of their spatial domains and the importance of their village plans for a sociological and cosmological understanding of their societies (see Lévi-Strauss 1963b; Seeger 1981: 66–80; Maybury-Lewis n.d.; Sá 1982). Many of the essential features of Gê cosmology are laid out horizontally on the ground, in concentric circles from the hard-packed earth of the central plaza to the nameless stretches of distant forest. Their village plan is also the basic outline of social relationships. This is not true of all native Brazilian groups, some of which have far more elaborate cosmologies with hundreds of spirits but far less significant village designs. Inversely, compared to other language families in the region, Gê concepts of spirits and levels of the sky are very little developed (for a comparison with the Tupi-speaking Arawete, see Viveiros de Castro 1986). Gê cosmology is geographic.

The different village spaces and their relationships must be constantly re-established and re-created. This would occur each time the Suyá constructed a new village or planned and executed a ceremony. A ritually active village was one with clearly defined spatial zones; it was almost possible to measure the collective activity in Suyá villages by noting the condition of the plaza and the main paths leading into it.

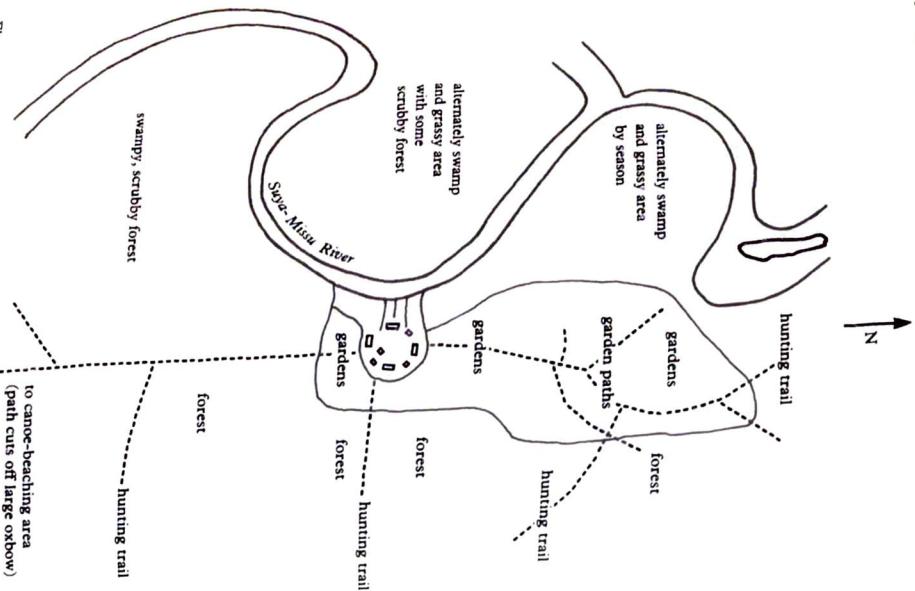
At certain times of year there was often little ceremonial activity in the Suyá village. The period from August through November was one of those times. Families were often out of the village on long trips to gather wild products, taking advantage of the low waters to kill many fish, gather a lot of honey, and eat the eggs river turtles laid in the sandbanks. Communal activities were rare, and the village plaza literally lost its clarity. Clumps of grass grew up within the circle of houses. The log racing track narrowed as bushes grew into it. The paths to the canoe-beaching area also became overgrown. One of the first activities after a ritual began was to begin a general clearing of the village. Men and women in each house would clear and sweep the earth on all sides. Virtually no grass would remain in the plaza, the racing path would be widened and smoothed, the paths to the canoe-beaching area would be cleaned. While this clearing had a practical aspect – the Suyá mentioned snakes and spiders as being good reasons to keep large clear spaces around the houses and on the paths to the water – it was regularly part of ritual activity. The physical state of the men's house also showed the effect of a long period without ceremonies. The men often burned the men's house thatch during the cold dry months of July and August, leaving only the bare poles standing. When the men's house was in poor repair, or even non-existent, one of the early activities after the start of a ceremony would be to rebuild it. During the years I visited the Suyá they constructed three of them, two to the southeast of the center of the plaza, one to the northwest.

The plaza was above all the domain of men and public performance. It was the location of their evening meeting place and the men's houses. Angry speech, everybody listens speech,

Figure 4.1 Suyá village and environs in 1972

women mourning the dead inside their houses, and old men shouting from their hammocks

Living as so many of us do in houses with solid walls, windows, and the soft noise of fans and running motors, it may be hard to imagine a society as acoustically transparent as the Suyá village. One could hear what was made public (loud) in every house, but one could not necessarily see it. Thatch and upright log walls hid quiet activities, but the cry of a newborn



slow speech, ceremonial recitative, and most songs were performed in the plaza. The plaza had several components, a night-time meeting place in the center and one or two men's houses off to one side. In a large village there were two men's houses, one in the east and one in the west side of the plaza, each associated with a moiety. In a village with a small population the two moieties shared a single structure on one side or the other. When the plaza was overgrown, there would be paths leading from the doors of most houses to the center of the plaza. Around its edge another path would link the front doors of each house to the other.

The plaza stood in vivid contrast to the largely female dominated kinship-based residence houses that surrounded it, and in a sense defined it. The houses were the homes of the primary audience – the women. In them people employed everyday speech, muttered 'bad speech' (selfish gossip), mourned, and quietly performed invocations. When men were performing in the plaza, women often sat in front of their houses, watching, or remained inside and listened to them. Men did sing inside the houses, but only rarely, and either as prelude to leaving or as a collective group. Children spent much of their time in and around their natal houses. Traditionally (before the 1960s), every adolescent boy was removed from the house he was born in and slept in the men's house until he married and moved into the house of his wife's parents. Barring separation or death, he lived there for the rest of his life. When couple's children were grown, their married sons would reside in other houses, and their daughters' husbands and children would live with them. The result of this arrangement was that the core of continuity in the houses was provided largely by a group of women. Recent studies of the Northern Gé groups – especially those by women – indicate that there may have been a male-oriented and plaza-oriented bias in some earlier studies. They show that the houses are tremendously important social units with symbolic continuity through individual names (for the Eastern Timbira see Ladéra 1982; for the Kayapo Verswijver 1985; Lea 1986) or house names (for the Suyá see Seeger 1981: 73–75). This group was not exactly a matrilineage, since the whole concept of lineage is problematic in the region (Seeger 1980b: 127–135, Rivière 1985). Lea, however, has amassed considerable evidence for matrilines among the Northern Kayapo (1986).

The circle of houses was enveloped by a zone of silence. The area directly behind the houses was called 'the dead side' or 'the black side.' This did not mean that people spoke in hushed voices there, but rather that things done there were private, not ceremonial, and were often undertaken in silence. Men and women in seclusion bathed there, food not shared with the community was often eaten there, and some domestic work was done there. Invocations were performed there sometimes, to cure ill patients. Non-relatives seldom entered the areas behind each other's houses. Just beyond the cleared area behind the house were the trash dumps, and a transitional zone of bush and a few plantings of pineapple or sweet potatoes that thrived on the refuse thrown there. They were well picked over by the parrots, chickens and the ducks that wandered freely, as well as by the groups of children who played there. Beyond the dumps people defecated and urinated, and perhaps met lovers on the maze of overgrown paths. Music was never sung in the dead side. Ceremonial groups passed through them in silence, as when the boys who had been singing in the forest camp on 29 January came to the edge of the village circle. In two years in the village I never saw a group sing there.

The gardens lay beyond the private area, trash dumps, and defecation trails, except on the

river side where there was no room for them (see Illustration 1). Entering the dense bushy gardens, the acoustic clarity of the village disappeared. Only gunshots, cockcrows, and the barking of dogs could be heard once a short way into them. Far more striking were the sounds of birds and insects. Since the Suyá cleared new gardens every year, and did so progressively further from the village, the point where the gardens began changed. Old gardens might be partly replanted to manioc, but they were usually overgrown with scrubby second growth and fruit trees, cut by trails leading to more distant gardens, hunting spots, or water sources. Ghosts were said to wander in the gardens, and women usually went there only in groups.

The concentric ring of gardens was not important in ceremonial activities except as a source of food. The gardens were never sung in as such; they were simply a place to cross on the way to a very important space – the forest. I suspect that the unimportance of the garden space was the result of an historic tradition: most Northern Gé villages were located on savannah, quite far from their gardens, whose products were important but whose space was not part of the village design. This was almost certainly true for the Suyá before they moved into the forested Kingú region where they could clear gardens at the back of their houses.

The forest was the domain of animals and spirits; the more distant forest was the home of enemies and powerful monsters as well. The forest stood in strong contrast to the plaza. The plaza was cleared of all growth and was the place where adult men sang collectively. The forest was entirely overgrown, where animals roamed, enemies lived, and where adult men usually traveled individually and silently. It was also in the forest that humans became transformed into animals and their songs were learned.

This is not to say the Suyá were not quite at home hunting in the low, bushy forest of their present homeland. Nor should they be imagined as terrified wanderers in it. Instead, the forest was represented by them as a place of unexpected encounters, unusual events, and radical transformations, among them the death of both humans and animals. Ceremonies used the forest as a place to transform human beings as well, and a number of them involved movement to and from a forested area. This was the importance of the forest camp in the Mouse Ceremony, where on the final night the dancers were transformed.

The Suyá sang in forest camps, in the houses, and in the plaza, and danced (or sneaked) from one domain to the other in very systematic ways. Their use of space was strikingly different from what has been reported for some Tupi-speaking groups that lived nearby. Among the Arawete and the Kayabi, there is no alternation between houses and plaza or between village and forest. Most of the performance occurs inside the house, and the major events usually involve possession and transition to a spirit realm above the village or house (Lins 1984; Viveiros de Castro 1986).

The way Suyá sang in space was significant. The different parts of their cosmos were marked by the sounds performed there (or the silence observed). The empty space in the middle of the circle of houses became a plaza when it was the stage for public performance. The houses took on their significance by supplying ornamented singers and the audience. The envelope of silence sealed off the village activities from those outside, except for those in the forest and the forest camp. The forest was the place for shouts and shout songs, but not for low unison songs. These spatial domains were endowed with meanings and associations by singing, dancing, and ceremonial activities. In this way, singing and silence were part of the constant re-creation of significant space. Everyday life tended to blur some of the distinctions between plaza and periphery; ceremonial activity and song re-established them.

## The year as a concert: creating time through sound

The anthropological investigation of time has revealed it to be socially constructed rather than a universally shared concept. Evans-Pritchard's study of Nuer time as it relates to their ecosystem and the needs of their cattle (1940) is a classic in the field. Yet time not only reflects seasons, lives, and other processes; it imposes order on them. Time as a socially relevant experience is created by societies and individuals acting within them. Although the Suyá could use the sun, stars, moon, and constellations to calculate time, its important social markers were imposed with song. Just as singing, dancing and other ceremonial activities clarified or re-defined certain spaces, so they re-established periods of time and some of the relationships among them.

The Suyá regulated themselves with a social calendar, rather than an astronomical one. The year was characterized by a wet and a dry season, and their musical year was also divided into two parts: rainy and dry season songs. Yet the seasonal songs did not simply follow the vagaries of rainfall and drought, but rather established a change of season. When the new season's song had begun, it was really that season – whether or not the rains suddenly stopped or began to fall once again. The day, too, presented a continuum of dark to light in the morning, the gradual movement of the sun during the day, and a change from light to dark in the evening. The Suyá marked these gradual changes of day and year with musical events of distinct types, presented by distinct performers with distinctive styles. As in the case of space, the time when music was performed was part of the creation of the regularities they apparently marked.

The Suyá talked easily about how ceremonial periods structure the year. I was often presented with descriptions of the annual cycle, the rain, and the ceremonies that were associated with them. A recording of Takuti was the most coherent presentation.

The men sing the dry season songs for a long time. The rain comes. Thunderstorms explode in the sky. Then we begin to sing the rainy season songs. We sing the rainy season songs. One of the men walks around the village all day singing his shout songs. A tough man sings all day, and in the afternoon the men all sing a rainy season song. They sing the rainy season songs. They sing the rainy season songs, they sing the rainy season songs. \*

'Well, what shall we do?' the men ask each other. 'I don't know.' 'Let's race with logs.' † We finish planting the gardens, and then travel out of the village.‡ When the berry *turi o si* is red on the banks of the river the men say 'Let's go back. Our corn is already ripe.'

[I omit a description of the return]

The men race with logs for a long time. They only sing the rainy season songs. They race with logs until they begin the Gaiyi Ceremony. They do the Gaiyi Ceremony for a long time. They sing the rainy season songs and run many log races. Then they say 'Let's run the Gaiyi log.' They go on a long hunt, and bring fish and game back to the village. They arrive in the evening and the *ngéu iáén* soloist performs his ritual instruction. The rest of the men look for a big log. [I omit a description of this particular race]

\* The use of repetition indicates repeated action over a period of time, and is a stylistic alternative to lawkidi's use of stretched syllables in the myth.

† This summarizes the moment when the men decide what ceremonies they will perform during a given season. Before steel tools, and since their introduction only when the gardens have not done well, the Suyá left the village after planting the new gardens and returned only when the corn was ripe.

Then the formal friends paint each other's feet. The Gaiyi Ceremony is over. They only sing rainy season songs now. In the rainy season we only sing rainy season songs. That goes on and on. At the start of the dry season we still sing rainy season songs. We sing them even though the Gaiyi Ceremony is over. Then it is the dry season. It is the dry season; and we sing the dry season songs. It is always thus.

## Singing as creative activity

It may have once been thus; by 1970 it was no longer. The Suyá ritual calendar never really recovered after the Juruna and their rubber tapper allies raided and burned their village to the ground around 1915. A number of ceremonies requiring especially large numbers of people were never performed after that, and the overall number of ceremonies diminished. In addition, more and more Upper Xingu ceremonies were introduced that did not require as many people, and they came to dominate at certain times of year. Nor did one ceremonial period always follow immediately upon another. When there was no ceremony in progress, Suyá men liked to turn on their radios at high volume from about 4:30 a.m. to about 6:00, perhaps substituting one form of music for another, observing the correct hour, and playing for the entire community to hear. Yet between the time an extended ceremony was initiated – for example after the first shout song of the Mouse Ceremony – and the time it was concluded, in the 1970s and 1980s the days still passed as Takuti described.

Ceremonial periods varied in intensity and length, leaving considerable room for innovation through the introduction of new segments. The Mouse Ceremony was fairly short in 1972. In 1976 the Suyá performed a Mouse Ceremony, followed it immediately with a Savannah Deer Ceremony, and then a Small Bow Ceremony. In the middle of all these they performed a whole series of smaller ceremonies, each with its own name and specific obligations between brothers, sisters, name givers and name receivers, the different moieties, and men and women. The Suyá would often perform a ceremony that belonged to one moiety and then one that belonged to its opposite. They would also sometimes insert several evenings of Upper Xingu ceremonies into the weeks of preparation for the end of a longer ceremony. The Suyá did not usually repeat ceremonies in consecutive years. They said they did not like to sing the same thing all the time. Thus not every year was the same, and the decisions of what would be performed would depend on the membership of the ceremonial groups most involved.

Each season had particular ceremonies that were appropriate to it. The Bee Ceremony would be performed when the gardens were cut; the Garden Song when the men set fire to the clearings; the Mouse Ceremony when the corn was ripe and drying on the stalk. Log races were only run during the rainy season. The Gaiyi ceremony was performed only at the very end of the rainy season. Table 4.1 summarizes the seasonality of Suyá ceremonies.

The songs of the two seasons – the rainy season songs and the dry season songs – formed the backdrop for all other ceremonies. No matter what other small ceremony was being planned or performed, the mornings and late afternoons were punctuated by the seasonal unison songs. This seems to be a characteristic of a number of the Gé (see Ayari 1982 on the Xavante). The seasonal genre *agachí ngére* and *káram kasug ngére* were interchangeable during their respective seasons, and new ones were introduced fairly often to the repertory. The morning song would begin after cockcrow, when the men either spontaneously went or were called quietly to the men's house where they sang facing the center of the plaza. The ritual specialist usually would lead the singing. Those who were not singing usually lay in their hammocks listening to the song.

Table 4.1. The annual round and the accompanying ceremonies

Month	Season	Agricultural cycle	Seasonal songs	Agricultural cycle songs	Upper Xingu Season-specific songs	Ceremonies
April	Dry season begins	Cut gardens	Dry season songs	<i>huru iuren</i> (garden recitative)	<i>judni</i>	Begin <i>pabingü</i> and <i>angrochongü</i>
May				<i>miben ngere</i> (bee song)		
June						
July						
August						
September	First rains begin	Burn cleared gardens & plant	Rainy season songs	<i>huru ngere</i> (garden song)	<i>jauari</i>	<i>iwanacuma</i>
October	Heavy rains					
November						
December						
January						
February						
March	New sweet potatoes		Rainy season ceremonies concluded, if not before this			

The terms may be translated as follows: *amuo ngere* = Mouse Ceremony; *judni* = an Upper Xingu ceremony called by the name of the hummingbird; *iwanacuma* = an Upper Xingu women's ceremony; *jauari* = an Upper Xingu ceremony learned from the Truman; *pabingü* = a traditional Suyá initiation ritual (literally the black initiates); *angrochongü* = a traditional Suyá male initiation ceremony (literally the wild pig song).

When it was light enough to see easily, the men would stop singing and disperse, some to bathe, some to hunt, some to the gardens, others to domestic activities. This was also the time when the men would stop singing if they had been singing all night. Actual sunrise came later; often the morning mist made the sunrise difficult to discern.

From sunrise until about 9:30 the village would usually be quiet. I was told that no unison songs were ever performed until noon. All that could be heard was the sound of manioc being grated, corn pounded, children playing, sometimes the distant barking of a dog or boom of a shotgun, the playing of a radio or cassette recorder, or the solo performance of shout songs.

While there were never any unison songs at this time of day, solo singers used these hours to prepare themselves for all-day performances, sitting on their mother's or sister's bed and singing shout songs while being painted by their female relatives. Then, at about 10:00, the solo singer would emerge from his maternal house (not where his wife lived), and begin to walk clockwise (if in the *Kew* moiety) or counterclockwise (if in the *Amboin* moiety) around the plaza. As he left, his mother or sister would weep. Solo singers would continue to sing the entire day, stopping every once in a while to rest in the men's house – where they were also singing. They might sing a certain deceased relative's shout songs all day, or their own.

I was told there was sometimes unison singing at noon. I never saw any. Instead, the solo singer would continue circling the plaza under the scorching sun. In the late afternoon, often after a men's house collective meal, the men would comment 'It is already late afternoon, often the sun is very low' and they would meet in the men's house and sing another unison song. The soloist would keep walking around and singing until the men finished. Then with final coda, he would walk to his sister's or mother's house and sit down.

The men would disperse once again, going to bathe, to eat, to talk with relatives. They would return to the center of the plaza at dusk, carrying small wooden stools and often some tobacco. This was a gathering rarely missed – no one remained in the forest or on the river at this time if he could avoid it, and a man's absence would be remarked upon and was usually the result of illness or an overnight excursion. This was a time of public oratory, the 'slow speech' of elders and the 'everybody listens speech' of political leaders. Sometimes the men would sing then, and go on into the night. Or they might sit around and smoke and talk, until some of the elders would say 'I'm cold' or 'It's already late at night' and leave for their houses, abandoning the plaza to the young men who would continue talking, joking, shouting, and disappearing on silent amorous pursuits. Silence, and silent activities, usually reigned until the pre-dawn singing (or radios) began the following morning.

The days were not separate, but linked through a series of interrelated performances. If a solo singer had performed on a given day, a solo singer from the opposite moiety would sing the next day. After that, one from the first moiety would circle the village, singing to the rest. These voluntary performances could go on for some days until it seemed as though there was constantly singing in the air. Shorter ceremonies were often inserted in longer ones. When the men were in the state of euphoria that defines ceremonies, they would perform one short ceremony after another, embedded in the larger ritual period. They were regularly up early to sing, and stayed up late carousing. The men's energy amazed me, and I would usually run out of tape, batteries, or physical energy, and be left swinging in the hammock as day after day they kept singing, hunting, finding racing logs and carrying them in, and assembling the materials for the ceremonial costumes of the final night. Night after night they would sing or play rough games long after dark. The more excited they got, the more energy they had. Suyá ceremonies tended to snowball in complexity and enthusiasm, with occasional tulls, at some point during which they would be harangued by the ritual specialist and they would start up again.

The way the Suyá related one performance to the next turned both days and years into musical performances. If the day began with morning singing, it would end with an afternoon unison song; if a solo singer began to sing at 9:00 in the morning, he would finish at the end of the afternoon group performance and be followed by another the next day. During the day there were times of unison sound, of domestic work, of silence, and of individual song. During the year dry season songs followed rainy season songs and were themselves followed by rainy season songs, each punctuated by appropriate seasonal rituals and some 'free floating' ones that might be performed at any time of year.

The relationship of performances to one another should lead us to re-think the concept of a 'piece' of music. To say that the Suyá year was a concert series is only partially correct; it was also a single concert. In one sense, the year was a 'piece' with two movements (rainy and dry season unison songs). Each seasonal song was defined not only in itself, but also in relation to the other part – already sung or as yet to be sung. In another sense, each season was a complete

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'musical piece' in itself, with a clear musical beginning, duration, development (through a series of cumulative ceremonies) and conclusion. In a narrower sense, each component of the series of smaller ceremonies performed during a given season was a 'piece', and the season a string of such pieces. In the narrowest sense, each individual unison or shout song performed was a unit – structurally complete and performed in the space of approximately half an hour. Each of these delimitations is correct, but each is incomplete by itself: Suya music consisted of small units that were conceptually (and in sound, gesture, and dance) integrated into larger units that were often described to me as a succession of seasons. Both longer and shorter periods of time were marked through song. The musical units must be considered in all of their various lengths and the musical performances studied as parts of a long series of such events.

### Society as an orchestra: the vocal re-creation of social relationships

What and how a Suya sang was largely defined by membership in groups determined by age, sex, and name set. Who would sing what kind of song today, and who would sing tomorrow, who would mourn for the dead and who would shout falsetto shouts was determined by group membership, rather than by 'talent,' 'personal inclination,' or 'experience.' Suya society was an orchestra of voices whose characteristics were more limited according to sex and age than their biologically determined characteristics demanded.

Different individuals or groups contributed different sounds to create a vocal orchestra. Listen to the faintly complex sound of Example 4.1 on the cassette, a selection from the conclusion of the Bee Ceremony. After singing Bee Ceremony songs in the evening (for weeks, all the men painted elaborate designs on themselves and ran (like swarms of bees, they said) from house to house, singing in each and in the plaza as well. This recording, just outside a house, captures not only the unison singing of the adult men, but also the sound of a young solo shout-song singer and the falsetto cries of an old man. In another house a woman was crying over the memory of a dead relative who liked that ceremony especially, and in yet another a different group of men was singing. Since thatch walls are not barriers to sound, sounds can be produced simultaneously in a number of different places and still contribute to the whole. It is difficult to capture simultaneous sounds produced in widely separated places on a tape recorder. The human ear is far better equipped to hear and interpret simultaneous sounds with very different degrees of loudness than a microphone is able to record them.

The excerpt from the Bee Ceremony may sound uncoordinated and anarchic, but the performance was creating and expressing a specific social order and community experience. Our orchestras are comprised of a group of musicians who sit close together and play under the direction of a conductor who coordinates their entire performance. No one in Suya society, not even a political leader, had the control over other people's actions that a conductor has over his orchestra. When the Suya performed, each person would participate according to his own role, sometimes only loosely articulated with the particular melodic performance style, and the space and time of the performance. Their sounds were compositions of different age-, sex-, and name-based groups to the orchestra were distinctive, and are

described in Table 4.2. The contributions listed in boldface indicate how those groups participate in the Mouse Ceremony. The others refer to their activities in other ceremonies but not in the performances of the Mouse Ceremony witnessed.

Although there are differences in performance style according to age, the biggest contrast in Table 4.2 is between men and women. In many Suya ceremonies, men were the performers and women were the audience. Shout songs were sung 'for' sisters and mothers who in fact listened and commented on their relatives' songs. Sisters and mothers had specific important roles in almost all ceremonies, but they did not sing. In the Mouse Ceremony, for example, young women whose names were part of a male name set accompanied the men on the final afternoon, but did not perform any shout songs. Painted with red body paint, but without dance capes, they accompanied the name set to which their name belonged with their eyes downcast, stepping back and forth instead of stamping. Sisters and mothers might provide food for their brothers or sons, receive food from them, hold their bows while they raced, paint them in their houses, and so forth. Women were central actors in all Suya ceremonies, which often emphasized the relationships between a man and his real and classificatory sisters and his mother over other kinds of kinship ties, such as those with his wife and in-laws. Women in their roles of wives and lovers, although essential to physical reproduction, were de-emphasized in ceremonies that stressed name-based relationships. In certain ceremonies, the men took a few unmarried women for cooking and sexual services on a hunting trip, leaving their wives at home. The women were called 'wives of the group' and monies involved a general realignment of relationships to de-emphasize the everyday sexual division of labor and marriage relationships, and to replace them with natal family ties.

Women's participation in ceremonial life was not all silent. They had a ceremony of their own, learned from Upper Xingu captives, called Iamuricuma. In it, they aggressively preempted the public performance space, and chased the men out of the center of the village, where they sang in unison. Another female contribution to the total aural effect of ceremonies was crying. Adult women often cried at the start of a ceremony, when they remembered and commemorated their dead relatives who used to enjoy it particularly, or when a brother left their houses after being adorned for his solo singing. The traditional crying (as distinct from non-melodic sobbing), performed regularly by only a few older women during my stay, was somewhat similar in form to a shout song. It had a descending melodic line. It was sung by individual women, but several of them might cry at once, creating a cacophony which recalls the men's collective singing of their individual shout songs. The words were composed by the woman who performed it, and usually referred to features of the dead. 'Oh, my grandson, my grandson. You were sick and now you are dead. My grandson, my grandson' is an example. Since these were most often performed in the tremendously emotional and often volatile situations immediately after a person's death, I never recorded the group crying sessions. Every song had a 'master' or 'owner,' which could be an individual or a group. Shout songs belonged to individuals and unison songs belonged to groups, although they both had origins or the animal domain. Certain groups either had the exclusive right to sing a certain song, or the right to refuse to authorize its public performance, in which case members of other groups would always ask them for permission to sing the song before doing so. Unison songs were always asked for permission to sing the song before doing so. Unison songs consist of all the adult men in the village (or women, or both), or a single moiety, or the

Table 4.2. Musical performances and Suyá groups defined by sex and age

Age grade*	Types of musical activity
MALE	
Neguryí (from 3–10 years of age; †)	<b>short shout songs, no participation in seasonal unison songs</b> , played at performing adult ceremonies, on the periphery of the performance.
Sikwenduyí (from 16–22 years)	<b>longer shout songs, participation in seasonal unison songs after voice change. Prepared food for men's house meals, shouted bird calls in Jawari.</b>
Hen Sunayé (1 child to 3 children)	<b>long about songs, solo shout song performance, unison singing, solo 'recitations' (uruh), this age group was most associated with all forms of singing. Active and intense participation in all ceremonies, with considerable laughing and enthusiasm.</b>
Wilkenyí (more than 2 grandchildren)	<b>long about songs, unison songs, day-long performances of solo shout songs, occasionally performed invocations.</b>
Hen Tumu (3 or more children to 2 grandchildren)	<b>sang shout songs lower in the throat than sikwenduyí, sang unison songs; few solo performances of shout songs, but could orate, are considered to be knowledgeable myth tellers, perform invocations. May choose not to participate in Mouse Ceremony after their name receiver is an adult, in which case they sit in the center of the village and watch.</b>
Puryí (from 3–10 years of age)	<b>Gave characteristic wilkenyí shout. Sang funayí, obscene shout songs. Danced and sang in a clowning style. Keened for dead; clowning pantomime.</b>
FEMALE	
No specific musical activity. Might sing songs from other tribes, accompanied young boys in the play performance of adult ceremonies.	
Puyí (from 10 years to first child)	
Accompanied male dancers but did not sing. Silent participants in several ceremonies as sexual partners, and took important roles in ceremonies of Upper Xingu origin.	
Hen Sunayé (1 child–3 children)	Fully active in Upper Xingu singing. Performed female Suyá songs, but did not lead them. Were important as an audience for men's singing. Prepared food for Mouse Ceremony and other ceremonies.
Hen Tumu (3 or more children to 2 grandchildren)	Led singing of both Upper Xingu and Suyá female songs. Told myths; keened for dead; performed invocations.
Wilkenyí (more than 2 grandchildren)	Olu people's shout, clowning shouting and keened for dead. Helped in performances but without singing. Were considered to be especially knowledgeable tellers of myths; performed invocations.
MOIETIES‡	
Ambayí	Sang more slowly, in east side of plaza, their songs name 'good' animals, from edible species.
Krenyí	Walked counterclockwise around the plaza when they sang all-day shout songs.
Sokokambungí	Sang more rapidly, in west side of plaza, their songs often named 'bad' or inedible animal species. Walked clockwise around the plaza when they sang all-day shout songs.
Sokodawí	Sang in east side of men's house or plaza and danced at the front of the line of dancers. Sang in west side of men's house or plaza and danced in the second part of the line.

\* This table summarizes Suyá sex- and age-based groups (for a full discussion see Seeger 1981: 106–147), and indicates their musical contribution to ceremonies. These age grades appeared not only in musical events, but in economic and political life, in conversation, oratory, and myths. They were one of the fundamental organizing principles of Suyá social life.

† The ages in this table are approximate. Young people were classified according to their size, while older people were classified according to the number of children or grandchildren they had.

‡ The reason there are two pairs of moiety names is that they appeared at different times, and have different membership. The Ambayí/Krenyí pair appeared in some ceremonies, the Sokokambungí/Sokodawí pair appeared in others. The Krenyí and Ambayí name sets were mixed together in each of the Sokokambungí/Sokodawí pair. This is one of the complex aspects of Gá social organization, where cross-cutting ceremonial ties bound all members of village together in several different ways.

members of a single name set within a moiety. The songs of a given group often had something in common – or were said to share a trait by Suyá. One moiety (*Kren*) sang rainy season songs more rapidly than the other (*Ambay*). Their songs also named different animals. Each name-based moiety or plaza group had its own songs. The people who sang together might be brothers-in-law who never spoke to each other, political opponents, or the best of friends. The way they felt about each other had nothing to do with the way they sang except in extreme cases when a man might refuse to sing entirely. Factional disputes did sometimes come to a head in ceremonies because suddenly what had been covered up came out in the open (literally) into the open because it was displayed in the plaza).

When the entire social orchestra was mobilized, a number of distinctly different simultaneous sounds built through juxtaposition to create an entirely different effect than any one of its parts – as in Example 4.1 on the cassette.

The importance of simultaneous sounds that are not necessarily rhythmically coordinated or even performed in the same place has been largely unrecognized in lowland South American music. Sometimes these 'extraneous sounds' have been carefully avoided in making the recordings, or edited out when the recordings were turned into a record. To unaccustomed ears, the simultaneous sounds are distracting. Anyone who has listened to records from this region has probably wished the shouts and cries didn't 'obscure' the 'music.' These cries have, in the past, been called 'incidental,' 'extraneous,' or 'non-musical' sounds. Their non-musicality, however, was sometimes over-emphasized in recordings where the technician had set the recording level to the level of the singing rather than the shouts, which were therefore distorted in the subsequent recording. Yet shouts, cries, weeping, and animal sounds are an essential part of the musical performance.

I discovered this when I was trying to make the best possible recording of an Upper Xingu song (known regionally as the *jawari*) the Suyá were performing in August 1982. After witnessing several performances of a given song series, I knew the adult men in the center of a long line of singers were the only ones really singing the unison melody. The young men, bachelors, and boys on the ends of the line were imitating bird calls, shouting comments to each other, and giggling. By using a directional microphone, I was able to make a recording that consisted largely of the unison singing. This was, to me, the 'music.' But when I played the recording back to the Suyá that night, they were terribly disappointed with the result. It wasn't beautiful, they said. It wasn't euphoric. It excluded an essential part of the performance. They insisted that I record the song series again, to get it right and make a 'beautiful' recording.

The Suyá reaction to my recording was one of the clearest statements I obtained about the

importance of the different parts to the total sound. The melody line – the clearly organized tone and rhythm being performed by the older men – was only part of the desired total effect, which also included the apparently irreverent calls, shouts, and giggles. Every age group

† The ages in this table are approximate. Young people were classified according to their size, while older people were classified according to the number of children or grandchildren they had.

‡ The reason there are two pairs of moiety names is that they appeared at different times, and have different membership. The Ambayí/Kren pair appeared in some ceremonies, the Sokokambungí/Sokodawí pair appeared in others. The Krenyí and Ambayí name sets were mixed together in each of the Sokokambungí/Sokodawí pair. This is one of the complex aspects of Gá social organization, where cross-cutting ceremonial ties bound all members of village together in several different ways.

contributed to the total effect, if not to the melody, and they were all important. I suppose my recording sounded a bit to the Suyá as if I had recorded only the strings in the performance of Beethoven's Ninth symphony, and ignored all of the woodwinds, brasses, percussion and voices.

The lesson to be learned from this is that our recording techniques can often be inappropriately selective. When, for example, we use particular microphones and set them up in a particular place, we are in fact making assumptions about the music itself. Selective recordings have their place. If one intends to analyze drumming, it is important to have the drummers clear and underplay the vocalists. If one wants to study the bird call imitations, it is distracting to have the men singing. It is essential, however, to evaluate the recordings with the people recorded. When the Suyá obtained cassette tape recorders, which were ubiquitous in the 1980s, the tape recordings they made were different from mine and very instructive as to parts of the singing that were of interest to them.

A Suyá participated in a ceremony according to who he or she was; what sex, what age, and what name group. Of the three, only an individual's age could change. Thus each time a person sang he or she reaffirmed (or established for the first time) a certain age status. A young boy might learn a long shout song for the first time. An adult man might begin not to force his voice as high as before. An older man might begin to clown before he had more than a single grandchild, or an old woman might retain the sober demeanor characteristic of a younger woman. Every ceremony was thus an opportunity to reaffirm not only what one was (a male and a member of certain groups) but what one believed one was or wanted to be.

Every performance of a ceremony re-established social relationships in other ways as well. A dramatic example of this occurred in certain log races, where each man received a little food from all of his biological and more distant 'sisters' in the way Suyá figure relationship (classifying parallel consorts as sisters). Sexual relations with distant sisters were not publicly accepted, but they appeared to gain piquancy and allure from the public approbation, and people who had addressed each other as brother and sister sometimes took each other as lovers. At the next log race, however, the sister-turned-lover was not supposed to give food to the man, nor should he ask for it. The possibility that certain men might not receive food from women from whom they had taken it in the past made that episode in the log races a dramatic one for revealing often hidden sexual relationships. The Suyá watched everyone very carefully. This occasion was just one more example of how ceremonies made public what had been private, and clarified some (often intentionally) ambiguous relationships. Performances established and re-established important relationships between groups and among individuals in very concrete ways.

### The body as a musical instrument

The body is involved in music in several ways. The performer learns the song, performs it with accompanying body movements, and an audience hears it. The significance of the faculties of hearing, speech, and movement, as well as the body parts associated with them, are emphasized through ornaments. The decoration of the body is never arbitrary; certain body parts are singled out for attention because they are important.

The most important Suyá body ornaments were those associated with hearing, speaking and singing, and dancing. Earlier in this century, both men and women used to wear large

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disks inserted in the lobes of their ears. In the 1970s the older men wore the ear discs as well as a wooden disc inserted in their lower lips (these are clearly depicted in Illustration 4). A person's ears were pierced around puberty; a man's lip was pierced several years later. These were the major body ornaments of the Suyá. Contact with Brazilian national society, depopulation, and the death of most of the older men, resulted in the abandonment of full initiation, and the end of ear and lip piercing. What follows is a description of body ornaments as they were used by adult men, and had been used by the entire population before 1960. Ear discs were associated with hearing and the moral qualities of proper social behavior.

The Suyá maintained that people who heard well also knew, understood, and acted properly. The verbs 'to hear' (*mbo*) and 'to behave morally' (*atti mba*) are very close, the latter resembling a reflexive form. They said that a person who listened (*mbo*) to the speeches of the elders would behave correctly (*atti mbai mbach*). The moral component of hearing was one of the reasons oratory was so important: if hearing and behavior were associated, then both speaking and listening would be tremendously significant. Kaukwati, in the example of 'slow speech' in Chapter 2, repeated over and over again that the elders 'listened to the speaking, followed the speech, and behaved correctly.'

All adults must listen, hear, understand and behave. Adolescence was an important phase for both sexes. Young men were initiated and entered the men's house, and young women eventually had a child and married. It was a time of life in which moral teaching was especially intense. Before that age, Suyá were quite lenient with their children and did not emphasize the importance of obedience as much as they emphasized the importance of sharing and the obligations of kinship relations. In addition to being a time for moral instruction, adolescence was the age when both sexes traditionally had their ears pierced.

The ear was also important in the physiology of knowledge. The Suyá said knowledge entered the ear and rested in the 'ear hole' (*mbai k're kam nau*). A song was said to 'lie in the ear' when it was learned, as did a weaving pattern. Knowledge, some of which in other societies is associated with the eye, was for the Suyá consistently an aural phenomenon. People who found learning difficult were said to have 'swollen ears' or, more lightly, to have 'frogs in their ears.' The ear was the conduit of knowledge and moral understanding, essential for correct behavior.

The lip disc was associated with public speaking, song, bellicosity, and adult manhood. Men had their lips pierced shortly before they left their mothers' houses and took up residence in the men's house. The association of the lip disc, the removal from home, and song were all clear in the activities of young men after they entered the men's house. They were supposed to sing constantly, to make larger and larger lip discs to insert in the hole in their lower lip, and to engage in few subsistence activities. The lip disc was a central symbol of masculine identity. They were worn day and night by the men who had them; ear discs were worn on public occasions but were often not worn in the domestic sphere. In all ceremonies the men inserted new ear discs and lip discs whose bright coloring contrasted with the everyday ornament.

The mouth was the principal means of instruction. As we have seen, the Suyá had many different kinds of instruction. In native South American groups there is often a variety of speech styles restricted to certain social roles. Leaders have few institutional resources other than speech; there are no police forces, immediately applicable punishments, or other clear forms of coercion. They rely on exhortations. When many members of a village no longer

follow their suggestions, they are no longer chiefs. Kinship ties and exchange relationships provide the underpinnings of political leadership among the Suyá (discussed in Seeger 1981:180–206). In terms of publicly accepted leadership behavior, however, speech is the primary activity. Among the Western Suyá, the brothers of a political leader are called 'political leaders who do not speak.'

Given the importance of the ears, hearing, and morality and of the mouth, speaking and masculinity, it is easier to appreciate the importance of instruction, oratory, invocation, and song. To a certain extent, the interrelationship of this group of concepts relating to speech and hearing also explains why the Suyá had not developed much of an interest in instrumental music. The voice was their most important musical instrument, and the main object of critical evaluation, and the word (embodied in song) was an essential part of knowledge. Even though the Suyá had known of the Upper Xingu Indian flutes for over a century, they did not adopt flutes or flute music as part of their permanent repertoire the way they adopted Upper Xingu singing. Nor have they adopted any non-Indian instruments.

The only kinds of musical instruments regularly played by the Suyá were rattles. With a rattle the body itself becomes an instrument. Rattles were held in the hand, tied behind the knees, hung on belts, and worn down the back. They were made of animal hooves, fruit pits, gourds, brass shotgun shells, and small metal bells. Attached to different parts of the body they all sounded quite differently. A rattle shaken by a hand was very regular and controlled; a leg rattle sounded when the leg moved, even when that was not in the rhythm of a song. A woman's hair could be adorned with empty brass shotgun shells that rang occasionally when they hit each other; a man could wear gourds hanging on strings from his neck that clashed against rattles tied to his knees in a totally different pattern from the rhythm of his steps. Rattles made a variety of sounds according to the material they were constructed from, the way they were attached to the body, and the movement that propelled them. The Suyá managed to create considerable variety in each of these.

Percussion instruments can only be played through movement, and dance is therefore an essential part of musical performance. The Suyá described their ceremonies in a number of ways, but one way differentiated between the kinds of movements involved in them. 'Up and down' (*larr*) indicated that the dance was an up and down leaping movement, characteristic of certain animals – mice and deer among others – and the ceremonies associated with them. Thus the Mouse Ceremony was leaped. Other ceremonies were simply 'everyone together' (*wudn runz*). Descriptive phrases were used for movements of groups of dancers – a line across, a long double line, and a movement in a circle – as well as for many kinds of arm movements. It appeared that a number of the more complex dance movements were no longer practiced. In a number of cases only the old men could perform them, and the young men were ashamed of their own attempts. The two sexes never danced and sang in a single line. If they performed together, it was as two parallel lines of dancers. When women joined men in a line of dancers – as at the Mouse Ceremony – they did so in silence, accompanying the movements of the dancers but without song and without rattles.

Suyá body ornaments and rattles created a socialized body that expressed fundamental aspects of correct behavior for adult men and women – speaking and singing for the men, listening and correct behavior for both sexes. The initiation rites that accompanied biological growth shaped the moral person just as they shaped the body by piercing the ears and lower lip. Although body paint, leg and arm wrappings, and other ornaments donned in ceremonies

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were significant in the parts of the body they covered, the permanent ornaments indicated moral features that were physically expressed.

### The concept of person

The concept of what a person is, the makeup of the biological and social individual, can be very important for understanding social processes. A number of studies of the concept of person in different societies have appeared recently, and it is quite clear that in lowland South America the concept was especially important due to the lack of other social institutions commonly associated with tribal societies such as descent groups.

The Suyá concept of person had three components. One of these was the body, associated with the individual's parents. Another was the social identity which was received with names from a more distant relative, and the third was the 'spirit' or 'shadow' (*migaron*) that was entirely individual.

The Suyá said their bodies were formed from their fathers' semen, which accumulated in their mother's womb and formed the fetus. Parents, children, and full siblings were said to maintain a kind of physiological identity throughout their lives, signaled by dietary and activity restrictions on the others when any one of them was sick. For example, when a man had a fever, none of his children, his siblings, or his parents were supposed to eat certain red-fleshed animals because ingesting them would have a direct heating effect on their relative and raise his fever even higher. Many aspects of interpersonal relationships were based on kinship and physical identity. Yet only certain kinsmen were important in song. Specifically, a man would sing for his sisters, and ceremonial activity intensified relations between a man and the women of his natal household. Most relationships stressed in ceremonies were those based on names.

An infant received its social identity through the names it received shortly after birth – from a member of the group of mother's brothers if it was male, or father's sisters if it was female. Name sets were not kinship-based groups; parents took care to alternate the Kren and Ambän moiety names for their successive sons when they selected the mother's brother who would give his names. That put their sons in opposite ceremonial groups for the rest of their lives. Names conferred (especially on males) an entire social identity – ways to paint and dance, songs to sing, ornaments to wear, and so forth. This social identity was painted on the skin and both covered and altered the unique identification of the physical body with the immediate family. The social identity was most often represented by various body paint designs (for an excellent article on Northern Kayapo body ornamentation, see Turner 1969). The name-based identity was passed intact, it did not change as the child grew older except that some individual nicknames might be added to the name set. Singing, dancing, and body ornamentation were the most important ways the name-based groups activated.

The third component of the person was entirely individual. Every person had a different spirit or shadow, already possessed by the unborn fetus. This spirit was not itself formed by the parents, nor affected by the names, and was located inside (or outside) a person's body, chest. The spirit usually stayed in the body. When it left (or was taken from) a person without a spirit ('person without a spirit') or died. After death, the spirit traveled to the east, climbed to the sky, and traveled to the village of the dead and apparently

lived forever in that huge village. The spirit was unique, and its misadventures caused some of the individualizing tendencies of Suáy life. When a child's spirit left its body, it could be found and brought back into the body by a good' witch. Or a bad witch could steal someone's spirit in anger, causing sickness and eventually creating a new teacher of songs.

When an infant was born it already had a body and a spirit. Within days it was given a social identity. From that time on, it grew and devoted more and more time to activities associated with its social identity – with painting, dancing, and singing. Suáy song emphasized the social aspects of the participants. When Kaitwati made fun of the young men in one of his public speeches by saying that they no longer painted themselves or wore arm and leg bands and thus had arms and legs like storks, he was pointing up the essentially creative and socializing aspects of body paint. Wearing the ornaments was said to thicken the limbs. To 'become a White man for the Suáy in the 1970s meant to stop painting the body', to wear clothes instead of body paint in rituals, and to refuse to participate in ritual life. Being a White man, like being a Suáy, was a question of ornamentation and what was on the skin. A person's biological identity was given as was his or her spirit. What had to be constantly affirmed and reaffirmed throughout life was a person's social identity.

Every ceremony was a re-affirmation of the social identity of the name-based groups, as well as of certain age- and sex-based groups that otherwise rarely acted together. Every ceremony involved different details that identified the groups and provided some of the differences and interest (for the Suáy) of their social identity.

### Studying music as process

If music is to be studied not as sounds but as the production of sounds, approaches to musical performance must provide a great deal of ethnographic data in order to present the social processes of which music is a part. The last decade has seen the publication of a number of articles and books on the ethnography of musical performance (for examples see Herndon and Brunyate 1976; Seeger 1979 and 1980; Herndon and McLeod 1980; Stone 1982; and Béhague 1984). To a large extent these studies were inspired by linguistic and folklore research into performance (described and illustrated in Bauman and Shterzer 1974) and the writings of Erving Goffman (1973). While most authors agree that until recently the context in which music is actually performed has been ignored in favor of structural analysis of what is performed, they recommend different ways to reconcile the form of analysis with the nature of the object.

Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon have repeatedly emphasized the importance of the notion of performance for ethnomusicology. Norma McLeod conceives of performance as the 'real behavior' of the specific musical event, not only its ideal behavior. Real behavior is the result of the interaction of players among themselves and with the audience and includes mistakes, dissatisfaction or satisfaction, and so forth. Too often the reality of performances is ignored in preference to describing the ideal; what a performance aspires to, or how it relates to some ideal (Herndon and Brunyate 1976: 2-3). This may recall Platonic philosophy, but it is closer to the distinction between *langue* and *parole* in language and *culture* and *action* in social life. McLeod proposes that ethnomusicologists study actual performances rather than the ideal to which they may aspire. The suggestion is developed further by Richard Bauman who describes the act of performance as 'situated behavior, situated within and rendered

meaningful with reference to relevant contexts. Context is another way that performance is patterned in communities' (in Herndon and Brunyate 1976: 35).

The concept of performance can itself create difficulties, however. Frisbie (1980) points out that there are ambiguities in the concepts of 'performance' when applied in music to all genres. Members of a given community may consider some musical events public performances (in which case they and the ethnographer agree) while other events are considered 'playing around' and not performance (contrast an aria in a concert hall with one in the shower; only an ethnomusicologist might insist that both were performed). Contexts, whether formal or informal, are defined by each society and isolated in time, space, and degree of public evaluation. We have not only to define the concept of performance, we have to discuss what kinds of performances occur in any society. Gerard Béhague summarizes the study of musical performance as follows:

Ideally, then, the study of music performance as an event and a process and of the resulting performance practices or products should concentrate on the actual musical and extra-musical behavior of the participants, and the rules or codes of performance defined by the community for a specific context or occasion. (Béhague 1984: 6)

Béhague is right. That is where the investigation should start. The issue of what is 'musical' and what is 'extra-musical' remains problematic, as we shall see below, and the issue of the extent to which performances are the result of fixed rules or make the rules must be established. Most of the contextual studies of music have focused on the influence the context has on the performance, and on searching for the extra-musical influences on the performance practice. This entire book is an argument that the musical performance is as much a part of the creation of social life as any other part of life, and that the creation and re-creation of relationships through the ceremonial singing creates a social context which influences other such contexts. Other authors, among them Herzfeld (1979), have made a similar argument for the impossibility of separating context from text in general. The context is part of the text. The points made here for music are applicable far more broadly to social life.

The analysis of musical performances as events is easier to suggest than to accomplish. In an earlier paper (Seeger 1980a) I suggested that one way to approach the context of musical events was to dissect it somewhat arbitrarily into the answers to the basic journalistic questions: 'what, where, how, when, by whom, for whom, and why.' The advantage of this approach is that anyone can begin an ethnography of performance without great difficulty, and the data so produced are far richer than we have been provided for most musical traditions.

When asked of Suáy song, these questions reveal important contrasts among the different genres. Table 4.3 summarizes data on performance practice for a shout song (Examples 1.1 and 1.4 on the cassette), a unison song (Example 1.3), and an invocation (Example 2.3) performance, which includes the answers to the questions 'what, who, how, where, when, to whom, and why?'

The Suáy men said they sang about songs for their sisters (described at length in Seeger 1980b). When I asked them for whom they sang unison songs, they responded that they simply sang them. They weren't for anyone. A man did not sing a unison song as a brother, lover, or individual. He sang it as a member of a group, whose identity was partly established

Table 4.3. 'What, who, how, where, when, to whom, and why?' *Shout song, unison song, and invocation compared*

**What?**  
*Shout song:* individually sung with loud, high, tense voice, at a variable tempo according to the body movement, accompanied by a rattle. Strophic form, characterized by descending melody contour.

Structure of two halves, each naming a different animal and presented with a clear progression.

*Unison song:* sung with a group in a low, usually quiet, unison following the cues of a song leader who established the tempo, often with a rattle. Strophic form characterized by a terraced melody contour.

*Invocation:* Structure of two halves, each naming a different animal and presented with a clear progression.

*Invocation:* performed by an individual without accompaniment in a very quiet voice. Non-strophic form characterized by a flat contour with use of *glossandi*. Parallel formal structures that progressed from blowing through referring to an animal trait, to naming the animal, to ending with further blowing.

*Shout song:* performed by boys, adolescents, and men (not women or old men). Taught by adult men and women, usually people without spirits.

*Unison song:* performed by men whose voices have changed (not boys except for Mouse Ceremony unison song); men and women together; women together. Taught by people without spirits. Led by a ritual specialist.

*Invocation:* adult men or women (not boys or girls). Taught by a person who knows it to an adolescent boy or girl interested in learning it, often in return for a gift.

*Show song:* performed with rattles and accompanying bodily movements, sung loudly and according to performer's age by individual singers.

*Unison song:* performed by a group usually sitting, standing, or dancing fairly close together, in unison and in a low register. There were clear attempts not to be heard as individuals except in a few songs where there were solo parts.

*Invocation:* performed in a very quiet voice, accompanied by blowing and sometimes a light message, in a middle register with *glossandi*, with no attempt to be heard by audiences only.

*Show song:* in the village plaza, in the forest camp, and in the residential houses only as a prelude to leaving them.

*Unison song:* in the village plaza and the men's house, occasionally in the residential houses. (Never in the gardens or forest, or 'for fun'.)

*Invocation:* inside the houses, in back of the houses, in the bathing areas on the river bank. (Rarely or never in the plaza.)

*Show song:* during the day in solo performances, all night long during group performances, whenever an individual feels euphoric in 'for fun' performances. Less fixed than the unison genres.

*Unison song:* before dawn, in the late afternoon, and sometimes during the night on the final night of certain ceremonies. Times were fairly regular.

*Invocation:* at dawn, in the evenings, and at the appearance of the symptoms.

*Show song:* sung 'for sisters' by men and boys.

*Unison song:* sung for the collective audience by the group.

*Invocation:* sung for the patient, and also for the efficacy of the song itself – it is not necessarily intended for ears at all. Patients are most often sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, or other persons related through kinship ties. When only one person knows a particular invocation, then all members of the village may use that person.

*Show song:* to reaffirm social ties to sisters and mothers, and to express emotions.

*Unison song:* to instill the identity of the collectivity.

*Invocation:* to instill a particular animal trait into the body of the patient so that a desirable physical change could take place.

genres – but the patient's body. Unlike other genres of Suyá vocal art, invocations could be effective even when they were not heard. Invocations suggest we must be sensitive to certain forms of discourse whose object is less to be heard and understood than to be performed and seen. Their efficacy is in the fact of the performance, and to some degree in their success at relieving symptoms, rather than in the actual reception of the sounds and their direct evaluation. The invocations themselves were not faded: they were really performed and they had a very elaborate system of metaphors which were employed in a highly structured way. But they were not performed to be heard by more than a very few people, one of whom could be quite sick.

Show songs were public and directed at certain relatives and shared a loud performance style and a number of specific musical features that helped ensure that the singer would be heard. Unison songs were public and directed toward the community as a whole, their musical features encouraged a more perfect unison. Invocations were private and directed at a physical body more than anyone's ears, performed so quietly practically no one could hear them. Although the ethnography of performance breaks down a performance by asking a number of different questions, the answers will often all be interrelated. The performance style is related to the intention, and to the spatial, temporal, and sonic context of which the performance is a part.

### The creativity of singing and ceremony

Ceremonies are not simply strict obedience to a set of rules. Ceremonies and music are performed by conscious subjects who are creating something that is at once a re-creation and a new creation under unique circumstances. A number of ways in which Suyá ceremonies achieved this have been described. The comparison of the gestures reveals their similarities and differences. But the performers were not singing simply to establish contrasts. Their singing was part of the creation of their society and their cosmos. To a certain extent singing positioned each person in relationship to those. Suyá musical performance was a 'structuralization' (a creation of the structures) of sound, place, time, person, and meaning in particular circumstances. A new song was new but shared an old structure. An old ceremony, performed by men acting according to set patterns, was also somewhat new because it was never performed exactly the same way twice.

Social scientists have become increasingly critical of approaches that overemphasize the fixity of social life and underemphasize the interpretive role of the members as thinking actors (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979). Although small-scale societies are often believed to be bound by tradition, without a written tradition codes can only exist to the extent that they are somehow created through performance. There was no library or ultimate text in the Suyá village. Instead, continual performance was essential to the reaffirmation or transformation of values, relationships, practices, and ideas that were essential to both the most mundane and the most exalted aspects of life.

The creation and re-creation of social life are accomplished in the details of everyday life as well as in ritual. Sharing a piece of fishline with a brother maintains that relationship as cleanly as singing over a name receiver. Not everything, however, can be created in everyday life. If fit were, ritual would have little innovative force or interest.

The Suyá continually re-created their society in a number of ways. These forms of social

reproduction included the re-creation or redefinition of spatial and temporal relationships, the establishment and re-establishment of social relationships, the formation of the body, and the expression of the continually developing social persona. Just as the introduction of new songs reproduced the long-standing relationship between men and animals and men and other Indians, so their performance at the appropriate times and in the appropriate places by the appropriate people re-established the fundamental individual, sociological, and cosmological parameters of Suyá society.

The ethnography of performance has justifiably renewed ethnomusicologists' determination to study music in its social context. I have suggested that asking the journalistic questions of what, who, how, where, when, to whom, and why, provides a useful, practical approach to the difficult task of defining the context of a performance. The answers to those questions are not the end of an analysis but rather the means to one. An ethnography is not an end in itself. Ethnographies tend to fix the forms of social action rather than see in them the elements of choice and creativity because the anthropologist is often unaware of the changeability of what he or she observes. A creative act, a strategy, a choice among alternatives appears to the anthropologist as a rule because there is little temporal analysis. The Suyá, for example, liked to experiment. At each performance a person was older and had opportunities for doing something new. He or she could try new ways of dancing or singing. Or a person might do the old things in an unusual space 'just for laughs.' If something were particularly successful, it could become part of a group's (name set, sex, or age group) activities in future ceremonies. Or it might simply be remembered with fondness, admiration, or scandal for decades to come. Creativity was part of the fun of social life, and ceremonies provided ample range for the creativity of humor, the creativity of speech and song, the creativity of self-decoration, and the creativity of degree of participation or lack of it.

All social actions are creative and re-creative. Suyá singing was a particular kind of re-creation. It morally weighted the times and spaces of social life. Singing created musical relationships between silence and sound, low and deep and high and tense, between fast and slow, between unison and solo, between shout songs and weeping, between the short silly songs of youth and the long serious songs of adults, the public songs of the plaza and the invocations of the periphery. Singing also established relationships among movements: between sitting and standing, walking counterclockwise and walking clockwise, approximations and removal from the residential houses, leaping and standing. It established relationships among groups: between men and women, between the *Ambán* and *Kren* moieties or the *Sotokombigé* and the *Sokadno*, and between affines and consanguines. Thus space, time, the body, and social identity all defined, and were defined by, vocal art. The relationship was intimate and formative, not simply reiterative and expressive of other realities.

To consider song and ceremonial life to be mechanical products of other aspects of social life is to miss the essential nature of musical and ceremonial performances. Suyá ceremonies created euphoria out of silence, a village community out of a collection of residences, a relationship out of physical matter. If a myth were not told it could be forgotten; if a it. If the plaza were not activated it could fall into abeyance and domestic relationships replace families or into very small settlements. In a village without ceremony, more food was brought

### Singing as creative activity

in through the back door, grass grew up in the plaza, men delayed coming out to the center of the village at night because life centered on the domestic group, and families drifted off leaving their houses standing dark, silent, and empty in an unmarked succession of days, seasons, and years.