



## INFO BONANZA!

So often I've Googled for and found what sounds like it will be a fascinating scientific article relating to a Whither Zither theme, only to find I have been taken to an *abstract* -- a summary -- of the article, with the actual article available only through a subscription to, say, **The Journal of Katydid Knee Displacement in Peruvian Sloughs**. I completely understand, moreover I often can glean enough information from the abstract to grok the gist of the piece enough for my Whither Zithery purposes. But I have to say it's nice to find articles available in their entirety.

Recently I came upon a wonderful government site -- and I can't figure out why I have never come across it before -- with a searchable roundup of thousands of complete scientific articles. It's called PubMed Central (PMC), self-described as "...a free archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature at the U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM)." It is the digital counterpart of NLM's huge print journal collection. The site goes on to say, "NLM believes that the best way to ensure the accessibility and viability of digital material over time is through consistent and active use of the archive. For this reason, free access to all of its journal literature is a core principal of PMC." Yay!!! Most of the articles are under some form of copyright, so you have to be aware of how they can be used, but what a resource! Here's the URL:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>

With Whither Zither in mind, I dove right in and searched gleefully. Many of the articles are fabulously obscure and peppered with arcane scientific lingo, though even those are tantalizing. But many are plainly written and easy to read. For example, here's one I found while searching for the term "folk music" that happens to be an "Open Access"

article; a Creative Commons designation which permits reproduction:

**Folksong Based Appraisal of Biococultural Heritage of Sorghum: A New Approach in Ethnobiology**, by Firew Mekbib, published in the **Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine** in May of 2009.

This study was conducted in Ethiopia, where the species of Sorghum called *Sorghum bicolor* has been a primary food source for thousands of years.

The article -- the download is a 19 page PDF -- in part makes the point that the farmer's multiple uses of sorghum (food, feed, fuelwood, and construction materials) should be taken into account in "formal sorghum breeding," and since many of the farmers are illiterate, their expertise with and appreciation of sorghum is primarily available through folk song:

*Sorghum has grown up;  
It has stretched its leaves;  
It needs soil heaping;  
Encourage me to do it*

and

*Oh collect sorghum carefully;  
Pile up the stalk vertically;  
Heap up the panicle;  
Acclaim sorghum the same way you do  
for the heroic*

and

*Sorghum stands by its foot;  
Wears its leaves;  
After dehulling in a pestle;  
What comes out is like the cows milk*

Anyway, this article alone made the whole site worthwhile for an old folky like me. But the PMC site goes on, and on, and on. There's an article called **Contact Dermatitis and Other Skin Conditions in Instrumental Musicians**, which discusses such delights as "fiddler's neck", "cellist's chest", "guitar nipple", and "flautist's chin."

There's **Creativity and Personality in Classical, Jazz and Folk Musicians**.

As you might guess, this study finds that folk musicians are more extraverted than classical and jazz musicians. As an interesting additional finding, folk musicians were more achieved in the domain of arts and crafts, whereas jazz musicians show higher divergent thinking ability, and a higher number of creative activities and achievements in the musical domain as compared to musicians from other genres.

There's **It's Sad but I Like It: The Neural Dissociation Between Musical Emotions and Liking in Experts and Laypersons**. I have to examine this more carefully; it's fascinating. But like most of these rich articles, it takes slow reading. This one is more user-friendly than many, but still has tantalizing but tricky sentences like: "The present findings demonstrate a neural dissociation between basic emotional responses to musical stimuli and evaluative pleasure-related processes on them, which are at the root of what Aristotle described as the "paradox of tragedy."

There's **Music and Early Language Acquisition**. There's **The Change of Music Preferences Following the Onset of a Mental Disorder**. There's **The Structure of Musical Preferences: A Five-Factor Model**. There's **Extreme Metal Music and Anger Processing**. There's **Everyday Music Listening and Affect Regulation: The role of MP3 Players**. There's **The Sounds of Safety: Stress and Danger in Music Perception**. There's **Words and Melody Are Intertwined in Perception of Sung Words: EEG and Behavioral Evidence**. There's **GPU Acceleration of Melody Accurate Matching in Query-by-Humming**.

And this isn't primarily a music site, of course. Music is just a tiny part of it, even though the word "music" brings almost 1500 hits. If you want to stroll down the scientific side of just about any avenue of thought, let this be your GPS.

*Note: I've not put in the specific links to the mentioned articles, which all can be found easily by searching the site for their titles. Bon Voyage!*

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