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Interactive research website about presidential campaign music continues to grow

As New Hampshire residents go to the polls for their primary Feb. 9, 2016, Trax on the Trail, a research website, celebrated its third month of tracking music from the 2016 presidential campaign. Since the initial launch of traxonthetrail.com, staff and contributors have added several essays to the site and maintained a growing database that catalogues music used in the 2016 presidential campaign, as well as published a lesson plan for educators and a podcast created by a student at Western University in Ontario, Canada.

During the months leading up to the presidential election in November 2016, essays, educational materials, database entries and resources for scholars will continue to be added to the site. Emily Abrams Ansari, assistant professor of music history at Western University, taught the music history students who are responsible for the site's upcoming podcast series.

"The students are, of course, thrilled to have been given such an opportunity ... I think the issue of campaign music is a fascinating one, and as advertising and electioneering become ever more sophisticated, [these practices] demand analysis from those with expertise in the domain of music," she said.

Sarah Kitts, junior music student at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Ga. is one of four research assistants for Trax on the Trail. She and other researchers are constantly tracking all musical activity on the campaign trail, including music used in candidate advertisements, songs played at campaign events and fundraising concerts, and campaign-themed music created by users on sites such as YouTube.

"As a student and researcher, I have learned so much about presidential campaigns I had never even considered ... It is interesting to see the music that each candidate chooses and how it fits into their campaign," Kitts said.

With contributors across the country, Trax on the Trail seeks to map the musical landscape of a presidential campaign for the first time in history.

"I appreciate that this site provides the unique opportunity to quickly produce and widely disseminate peer-reviewed scholarship relevant to the cultural moment," said Joanna Love, Trax on the Trail contributor and assistant professor of music at University of Richmond. "This allows for real-time dialogue between academics, students, practitioners and the public."

The Music Division at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts has taken interest in Trax on the Trail.

"In our own collections, we have sheet music, songbooks and historic recordings that relate to political campaign music ... The Trax on the Trail site helps to generate interest in that subject; ultimately, this interest could lead researchers to seek materials in NYPL collections," said Jessica Wood, assistant curator at the Music Division/Rodgers & Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at NYPL.

Trax on the Trail uses [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Tumblr](#) to regularly post related articles from media outlets to inspire thought and engagement in followers who are interested in the subject. Trax on the Trail staff will also join with WRGC 88.3 FM in Milledgeville, Ga. to host a regular radio show for listeners who want to learn more about campaign music.

Musicologists, educators, scholars and organizations interested in collaborating with Trax on the Trail are encouraged to contact Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, creator and co-editor of Trax on the Trail and assistant professor of music at Georgia College. She can be reached at traxonthetrail@gmail.com or 478-445-8630.

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Trax on the Trail is a website where scholars, educators, journalists, students and the public can learn about American presidential campaign music and gain insight into how sound participates in forming candidate identity. Learn more at <http://traxonthetrail.com>. Trax on the Trail is sponsored by:

