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Gerard Béhague

Boundaries and Borders in the Study of Music in Latin America: A Conceptual Re-Mapping

For this inspiring occasion,* I recently re-read most of the inaugural lectures of the doctoral program in musicology presented in 1968 at the City University of New York and subsequently published as *Perspectives in Musicology* (Brook, Downes, and Van Solkema; 1972). I did so after many years removed from that book and came away with a renewed admiration for some of the advocacies of the old timers and their truly humanistic concerns (especially those of Paul Henry Lang, Georg Knepler, Frank Harrison, Gilbert Chase and, of course, the ethnomusicologists Mantle Hood and J. H. Kwabena Nketia) but also with a perplexing reaction caused, I believe, by the rather stifling nature of some of the propositions. In many ways, the lectures as a whole reflected some of the basic questions of the very identity and life of our fields of study as perceived and debated then by experienced and wise practitioners. Concurrently, they provided a general assessment of music scholarship achievements as well as lacunae in various times and spaces from privileged vantage points. They did not represent, however, the “avant-garde” of musical scholarship although several of them projected quite accurately future trends in research.

This lecture series, “Perspectives 1998,” could perhaps address the issues, among a multitude of them, of whether the nature of historical musicology, as described by Gustave Reese in his 1968 lecture, has changed and in what directions, whether the terms “anthropomusicology” and “cultural musicology,” as proposed respectively by Frank Harrison and Gilbert Chase, were conceptually better, i.e., more accurate and dependable, than the more commonly used but still not universally accepted “ethnomusicology.” We could also wonder whether most of us have come to the side of Frank Harrison’s conviction that all musicology is in a sense ethnomusicology, and we have therefore changed our various approaches

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in the training of new generations of graduate students (and not necessarily training on a “good musicological ship,” as dreamed by Frank Harrison!). Although I, for one, am fascinated by most of the issues at hand then and now, I can only address a few of them here as they relate to my topical interest.

One of the points of the 1968 discussions that has been carried out, by and large, is the recognition in musicological studies (broadly conceived) of the necessity of interdisciplinarity. In the kind invitation extended to me for participating in this series, Professors Atlas and Slavin stated unequivocally that “we are hoping that this issues-oriented, interdisciplinary approach will emerge as the thread that runs through all seven papers.” Back in 1968 Paul Henry Lang referred to the remarkable musicological talent existing in this country and wished that “this could be organized so that it had a more institutional and a more interdisciplinary basis.” As a whole one could say that his wish has indeed been realized, for there is hardly any creative scholarship nowadays that is not informed by some aspect of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary procedure, being “hermeneutics, exegetics, or what?” (as Prof. Treitler’s earlier lecture in this series must have mentioned); political science (especially the political economy of music which Jacques Attali associated with “Noise,” [1985] and the political economy of passion associated with the Argentine tango by Martha Savigliano, 1995); social anthropology; and all other anthropologies (political anthropology, linguistic anthropology, anthropology of the performing arts, anthropology of emotion, and especially the anthropology of music as well as musical anthropology). Lang’s answer to his own question of “how far can ethnomusicology be said to have justification and meaning, what degree of scientific value?” bespeaks a surprisingly narrow view of the field:

no more than a pseudo-intellectual tool for that vague interracial brotherhood that any decent person would naturally espouse.

Primitive culture is our own contemporary, but there is a likelihood that this primitive culture may reflect certain aspects of earlier stages of the higher cultures so that in it we can read some of our own past where other documents fail. (195)

Even at that time, this type of unilinear evolutionary thinking was being questioned seriously. By 1968 ethnomusicologists had more or less defined the field as the study of music in and as culture, integrating primarily musicology and ethnology, considering not only music composition as process, but the uses and functions of music, the behavioral aspects (physical and verbal) of music making, the interface of music and language, synesthesia and intersense modalities, music and social behavior and as symbolic behavior, aesthetics and the interrelationship of the arts, music and culture history, and music and culture dynamics (Alan Merriam 1964).

While ethnomusicology was still defined by its main study-object, i.e., oral musics of illiterate societies, or worse “ethnic” musics (an abominable term!), it gradually came to be conceived as a holistic approach to the study of any musical tradition, or at least most ethnomusicologists so wanted to believe. I submit that the increased recognition in the 1970s of the significance of the study of “humanly organized sound” and “soundly organized humanity” as John Blacking would define the complex “music,” in his search for answers to his perennial question “How Musical is Man?” (1973), had an impact on the awareness of the importance of interdisciplinarity. Surely, the anthropology of a Clifford Geertz of the early 1970s was finally “discovered” in the 1980s by some historical musicologists (as in the case of Gary Tomlinson, 1984) and also had a strong influence on the interdisciplinary path which, together with other disciplines, informed the so-called “new” musicology.

Now, let me turn to the two inaugural lectures that have particular relevance to my topic here: Gilbert Chase’s “Musicology and the Social Sciences” and Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo’s “The Present State and Potential of Music Research in Latin America.” The latter was a dear friend whose counsel proved invaluable during my years of study at the University of Paris and who recommended me to Gilbert Chase, who became my mentor and constant well-wisher during my doctoral studies at the Inter-American Institute for Musical Research at Tulane University, and beyond. Gilbert Chase believed that the major breakthrough for American musical studies would only occur “through the fusion of the two disciplines—historical musicology and ethnomusicology—under the more impelling impact of the social sciences” (212). Within the perspectives of 1998, his lecture appears perhaps somewhat too explanatory, canonical, and dogmatic, but his attempt at legitimizing both American and Latin American musical studies within academia was undoubtedly his main motivation. Regardless, he made some very pertinent remarks, such as his insistence on the validity and necessity of the ethnohistorical method in musicology for the comprehensive study of American music as a whole. He foresaw a comprehensive history of American music as one that “would cut across all strata of musical expression, from the so-called primitive to the most highly developed art forms, embracing the entire spectrum in between, from traditional folk-song to the folk-pop-rock-soul-gospel-jazz synthesis of the 1960s” (212). He also believed that the term “comparative musicology” should have been revived, not in the sense of the study of non-European musical cultures, but in the sense used in comparative linguistics, that is, the study of changes in language. However, as many people of his generation, Chase conceived of ethnomusicology quite restrictively as the study of primitive and tribal music, therefore he did not favor the terminology, as “too narrow and inappropriate for the intended purpose” (presumably the holistic study of American musical traditions). He then proposed the

unhappy term “cultural musicology,” by analogy with “cultural anthropology.” Unhappy indeed because musicology does not carry similar branches of anthropology (physical, social, archeology, ethnology, etc.) to justify the qualification “cultural.”

In his infelicitous representation of ethnomusicology, Joseph Kerman (1985, chapter 5) appeared only interested in contesting the possible ways ethnomusicological and ethnohistorical methods could serve the study of Western art music. While acknowledging the existence of “repeated attempts...to deal with Western art music in terms of social and cultural history” (170) (from Curt Sachs to Leonard Meyer), which is not quite the same as the social sciences advocacy of Chase, Kerman believed that the relative failure of the application of ethnomusicological research to Western music came primarily from his inconceivable but real confession that “Western music is just too different from other musics and its cultural contexts too different from other cultural contexts” without specifying, however, what other musics and other contexts he had in mind, presumably Western music versus that of the rest of the planet! Furthermore, he stated that musicology has traditionally been an ally of the humanities, not the social sciences, but acknowledged that “humanistic scholars today are learning so much from social scientists” (175). Yet, in his opinion, musicologists should avoid drawing directly from the social sciences in their study of Western music. The simplistic reasoning invoked to support that opinion referred to the lack of “uniformly brilliant results in reference to non-Western musics, as the lingering polarization within the field of ethnomusicology testifies.” A glaring misunderstanding indeed of the history of ethnomusicology! Finally, Kerman somehow gave a hint of what he felt the directions of “cultural musicology” might be when he stated: “There are new opportunities today for initiatives in ‘cultural musicology’, though these may take a course different from that which Chase anticipated” (181). Surely, if ethnomusicology represented in the 1980s a challenge to musicology, Joseph Kerman failed haplessly to identify the challenge and its possible solution partly because of his biased views of the historical and ideological development of ethnomusicology since the 1950s.

Turning now to the piece of Professor Corrêa de Azevedo on Latin American music research, he surveyed methodically the works of historians, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists from various countries of the hemisphere, almost in the manner of a *catalogue raisonné*. He did so with such impeccable diplomacy and indulgence that the lecture stands as a feat of courteous generosity. But he also raised significant points, such as the “fact that ethnomusicological research preceded historical musicology, all over Latin America,” (but most likely not for the reason mentioned, i.e., a reflection of colonial mentality); the overall European and North American condescending views of Latin American art music, based on an inappropriate comparative value system; and the recognition that in many

countries “musicology has not been a field of academic priority” (264). However, his review of the musicological literature was certainly not issue-oriented for the most part, as he neglected to assess critically the ideological-theoretical stances that informed the work of such important names in Latin American musicology as Carlos Vega, Vicente Mendoza, Otto Mayer-Serra, Mário de Andrade, Isabel Aretz, Robert Stevenson, and Francisco Curt Lange, to cite only a few. It probably would have been preferable to concentrate on the ideological history of Latin American musicology and the sociology of its representatives at various periods to understand and then explain the nature of the resulting works.

Throughout the twentieth century Latin American and Caribbean music scholars have viewed the musics of their countries according to the prevailing ideology of a particular period affecting the perception of social groups’ constitutions. These were considered in terms of a given cultural and ethnic heritage or origin, their alleged position within a given social stratification, and/or their geographical location (following the classic rural-urban distinction). Isabel Aretz’s edited well known volume, *América latina en su música* (first ed., 1977), part of the UNESCO series *Latin America in its culture*, was supposed to follow the two main factors of the theoretical focus in the series, namely: 1) “consider Latin America as a unified whole, integrated by its current national political formations,” which required of the exclusively Latin American contributors “to feel and express their region as a cultural unit,” and 2) “consider the region primarily from its contemporaneity,” looking at the past whenever necessary to understand the present. This idealist stance, however, emanated from a rather anachronistic view of the culture of the continent (especially in its contemporaneity) and did not represent then (and certainly much less so now) the reality (emanating from historical, socio-geographic factors) of the cultural diversity that prevails in Latin American societies. It probably was more the result of UNESCO’s biased views of its constituents at that time rather than an informed and deliberate perspective on that reality. It was also the result of a rather demagogic nationalist political agenda of dubious national political formations, in which social and ethnic differences are deliberately ignored or minimized. Although Latin Americans are on firm ground in extolling the creation, development, and qualities of “La Raza” over the last five centuries, it is by no means an homogeneous concept of culture. Indeed “La Raza” takes on rather varied forms and constitutions according to a particular cultural region and its specific ethnohistory.

Latin American scholars in the first half of the twentieth century held quite Eurocentric views on the boundaries of the musics of their respective countries. Carlos Vega, among others, identified “ethnic” music (as that of “primitive groups”), folk music (associated with rural groups), and art music (with urban groups). In-between, he included “popular” music defined

(as late as the 1960s) as “minor creations strongly linked to the vague idea of ‘the people’ (middle and lower classes, the less educated classes, and also, by extension, the rural classes; that is to say—in most cases—the folklore groups)” (Vega 1966, 2). Recognizing that the term “popular” can have multiple meanings, Carlos Vega later opted for the term “mesomusic” which he defined as follows:

Mesomusic is the aggregate of musical traditions (melodies with or without words) functionally designed for recreation, for social dancing, for the theatre, for ceremonies, public acts, classrooms, games, etc., adopted or accepted by listeners of the culturally modern nations. During recent centuries, improvements in communication have favored the dissemination of mesomusic to such a degree that today the only exceptions to its influence are the more or less primitive aborigines and the national groups that have not yet completed their process of modernization. But, since mesomusic is not an exclusively Western music rather a “common music” of mankind, there can exist eccentric foci with dispersal over wide areas of the world. Mesomusic, then, coexists in the minds of urban groups along with fine-art music, and participates in the life of rural groups along with folk music. (1966, 3)

In effect, this definition is only useful at the most general level of functionality but fails to consider the specific attributes of the makers and consumers of “mesomusic.” In addition, it tends to be too inclusive, admitting all species or genres that are deemed outside the art-music, folk-music or so-called “ethnic”-music repertoires. In its basic conceptualization, however, “mesomusic” is the equivalent of the contemporary use of urban popular music. Vega’s term has only remained in the vocabulary of some Argentine and Uruguayan students of popular musics, and does not subsume any specific benefit over the more accepted term of popular music.

Mário de Andrade in his famous “Essay on Brazilian Music” (1928) refers to “artistic music” on the one hand and “popular” music on the other, the latter in the sense of music of the folk, however made up, wherever located. The main determining factors of his classification are always social. For him, “Brazilian” music was all national music with or without “ethnic character,” from the church music of Father José Mauricio, the Europeanized symphonies of the end of the nineteenth century, to the light theatrical dance pieces of popular composers such as Chiquinha Gonzaga, and the piano pieces of Ernesto Nazareth.

Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera as late as 1980 referred to “etnomúsica” in the sense of “traditional music” in its study of the phenomenology of that music.

Subsequent generations of Latin American scholars have insisted on setting the boundaries of musical traditions according to the existing social stratification. María Ester Grebe (1972), among others, perceived those traditions in a four-part model of stratification: “primitive” traditional indigenous communities, folk-rural-peasant groups, urban popular mestizo

groups, and dominating elite urban groups. The basic difficulty with such a criterion of classification comes from the fact that stratification is not fixed and stable, and socio-cultural or ethnic identity can vary considerably in time and space and according to the various contexts in which it is negotiated and for what specific purposes. Boundaries and borders are clearly related to the question of identity and must be rethought with special attention to the various factors that contributed to forge a contemporary identity. Actually, we must recognize Richard Morse's interpretation that the word "identity" keeps losing its edge and thus needs to be resharpened periodically. Morse writes in a masterful essay (1995) that "identity is not 'national character' as diagnosed by detached socio-psychiatry but collective awareness of historic vocation." Identity "starts with tacit self-recognition" (Morse 1995, 1). What seems particularly relevant, therefore, is the articulation of the relationship between music and the various contexts of identity (self-recognition) construction.

In my 1982 essay I called attention to the dubious benefit of former searches for origins in Latin American and Caribbean musical expressions in relation to the configuration of contemporary societies. I warned then that Europe and North America's general tendency of viewing Latin America as a monolithic cultural area has often resulted in naive, simplistic, and reductionist generalizations of the traditional musics of Latin America, particularly in the writings of non-Latin Americans. The actual diversity of the musics of the Latin American continent became clearer since the 1960s as a result of more field research carried out by Latin American, European, and North American scholars. To this day we have not, however, accumulated enough empiric knowledge of the vast music corpora of the continent to allow meaningful and comprehensive cross-cultural comparisons among music cultures that share a common ethnohistory but have developed different cultural expressions, for example, in the case of Afro-Caribbean communities of Cuba and Haiti and those of Western Colombia and Northeastern Brazil. I also argued at that time that the significance of the prominent social stratification that typifies Latin America's social organization elucidates to a large extent the musical expressions that function as class identity symbols. I submitted then that this stratification provides the keystone for accounting for the various musical, performative practices to be found in both rural and urban areas of the continent, providing that stratification is contextualized in very specific terms (time and space).

The ways in which we have classified the musical traditions of the area need further reflection. For example, Indian cultures in Central and South America range from nomadic, hunter and gatherer social activity and organization in varying climatic and geographic zones to sedentary, often isolated agriculture-based tribal groups in both high mountainous and tropical-forest regions, to homogeneous, distinctly native enclaves in close

contact with mestizo culture, to highly integrated (acculturated), Westernized native communities. This variety of culture organization, of historical and ecological conditions explains logically the wide diversity of musical styles, functions, and meanings among them. The most striking examples of this diversity can be found, for instance, between the music of the now extinct Selk'nam (Ona) Indians of Tierra del Fuego and the traditional music of the Purépecha (Tarascan) of Michoacán, or the music of the Kamayurá of the High Xingu reservation (Brazil) and that of the Guajiros of Venezuela, the Tzotzil of southern Mexico, or the Kariris of Northeastern Brazil. In addition, one should realize that within the same Indian community some musical expressions are frequently conceived as more traditional than others. The demarcation may be set according to functions. Ritual activities involving shamanic performance, for example, frequently call for a traditional style of chanting in otherwise integrated-hybrid groups. Ascribing a magic, supernatural origin to music is still common among Indian groups, regardless of their degree of integration with dominant cultures. Likewise, certain musical instruments associated with specific rituals retain their sacred functions and are not mixed with other instruments specified for the performance in non-ritual occasions. Thus, certain Indian cultures are truly and naturally bi-musical, maintaining the styles and functions of their ancestors in varying degrees and those of the predominantly mestizo populations.

Over the last three decades, the musical expressions of the most traditional Indian cultures of South America have undergone drastic changes, as a result of outside influences and the inevitable acculturation or hybridity process. Even such remote, isolated areas as the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon regions and *montaña*, and the Brazilian Amazon and Mato Grosso plateau areas, to name a few, have seen the penetration of non-Indian explorers and land developers frequently forcing the native populations to relocate and to adapt to new patterns of social organization and cultural values, including music. These Indians have now entered the colonial phase of their history as have other cultural groups in Latin America since the sixteenth century. The result is that there is hardly any Indian group nowadays whose music does not reveal some aspect of this cultural process, including the reflection of adaptive strategies of some Indian groups to the culture of other native groups with which they came into contact in the recent past. These consequent musical transformations and expressions may bring a wide scope of innovation, deserving the close attention of ethnomusicologists.

Concurrently, the thorny issue of “authenticity” or “falsity” of native musical and cultural expression among some contemporary groups has been raised recently. A specific case in point, among many, is the famous “Danza Azteca” of the various *concheros* groups among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. This dance forms part of numerous dramatic dances of

Iberian origin, such as the dance of Christians and Moors, that illustrate the integration of indigenous and mestizo Christian beliefs and musical practices in Mexico and Central America. Also known as *danzantes de la Conquista* (“dancers of the Conquest”), *corporaciones de danza azteca* or *chichimeca* (“Corporations of Aztec dance or chichimeca”), the concheros supposedly represent defeated Indians who converted to Catholicism and became active soldiers of spiritual conquest beginning in the sixteenth century. In many ways, the contemporary concheros represent a highly characteristic view of the essence of Mexican/Mexican-American identity in which a kind of attachment to pre-Columbian Mexican Indian culture emerged as a fundamental element of that identity. The danza of the concheros is the result of two very religious cultures: the pre-Columbian native and the Spanish of the Golden Century. Among the many elements that contribute to this tradition (beliefs, ritual, symbolism, poetry, music, dance and costumes, and even the paramilitary type of organization of the concheros and danzantes), some are of clearly indigenous derivation (such as the use of *teponaztli* and *huehueltl*), other Spanish, but all are certainly very Mexican. Gertrude Kurath (1946) analyzed twenty-seven different dance figures that accompany six songs that she collected in the 1940s, and found that the style of the dance was “utterly Indian in the forward tilted, bowed torso, and in the special quality of emphasis.” The music itself, however, is strongly associated with the Spanish heritage, not only in the responsorial singing very common in popular Catholic music (including the ever present parallel polyphony), the vocal production, but also the accompanying harmonies and the instruments themselves, the *conchas* (guitars of five courses of double strings made from an armadillo shell), to which are added mandolines. Vicente Mendoza, also in the 1940s, pointed to what he called a “tremendous Hispanic influence, due to the instruments used, that impose an [Hispanic] performance technique, harmonic technique, as well as a concept of European tonality and modality, maintaining as indigenous some rhythmic formulas” (1941, 49). Among the various costumes used for the dance, Kurath described her observations in the following manner:

In Acopilco I saw one group with great capes of brilliant colored silk, with brief tunics, very gorgeous feathers and very hard-soled silvered sandals. This group was subsidized by the government—which evidently led to more display, more virtuosity in what was apparently an effort to reconstruct Aztec costume. The costumes conveyed nonetheless an effect of ostentation. (1946, 388)

This conchero tradition and that of the Danza Azteca or Chichimeca or Tolteca, have retained a prodigious vitality throughout Mexican history, and since the 1970s have become an integral part of Chicano identity. The concheros and danzantes whose ceremonial objective is the search for

“cosmic harmony and integration” as mentioned by Andrés Segura, (one of the most celebrated conchero leaders, see Poveda 1981) became gradually important first in Texas then in California. In the words of Segura the original purpose and aim of Mexican concheros for coming to Texas was for

all of our brothers to become aware of their origin and conscious of the value of the culture from which they come. And not only those of Austin [Texas], but also those of the whole Texaztlán and those of Califaztlán, what people from here call Aztlán, which is the place from where we come, we the “mexico-tenochcas,” the Aztecs.

Whether or not the concheros are indeed the descendants of Aztecs is a moot point. The fact is that they have used the “conquest” culture, evidently made up of pre-Columbian Indian elements together with typical traits of the colonizers (including Christian religious beliefs and practices), as an integral part of their own contemporary [mestizo] identity. This identity has been carried over into the Mexican-American community in the United State as numerous testimonies clearly indicate (for example in Bruce Lane’s film *Eagle Dance*). The two main ceremonies observed by the concheros are the *velación*, a private rite to Catholic saints and to the spirits of ancestor-concheros (known as *ánimas conquistadoras*, or “Conquest souls”) and the *danza* itself which consists of a public ceremony, performed at least four times a year, in four major sanctuaries, of which those of Chalma and Villa de Guadalupe are the most important.

How are we to classify this tradition of dance-music-ritual? An imagined community? Whatever criteria might be privileged it is pretty obvious that the concept of “authenticity” in terms of historical, cultural, and ethnic accuracy cannot possibly be seriously considered here as one of the determining factors of reality. It would be totally inappropriate simply because what really matters is the perception of self (selves) as contemporary Mexicans, who see themselves as the inevitable product of two cultures at one time conflicting with each other and confronting each other, but now overlapping in an integrating unit. The resulting haziness of borders and boundaries, in such a case, comes from the tacit recognition of the essentially mestizo nature of the expressions of their culture and the self-recognition within it. Surely, there still is an indigenous focus in the construction of identity as a most likely resistance to or counter-hegemonic strategy against the dominating criollo or Hispanic element in the cultural configuration over time.

Among numerous other musical cases, the example of the Q’eros of highland Peru is quite telling. Considered by such a scholar as Rodolfo Holzmann and sensitive filmmaker John Cohen as one of the most traditional Indian cultures of the country, reticent to acculturation or transculturation due to their relative isolation and autonomy, they nevertheless cross borders readily in their social music consumption, as clearly

illustrated in John Cohen's film (1984) *Mountain Music of Peru*. Here they gain access to *huayno* music and dance through the magic trick of technology (playing a 45-rpm disc on a battery-powered record player) and seem to enjoy it thoroughly. In such a case, can we really believe that even the Q'eros have remained isolated from their neighbors? And, most importantly, has their musical culture truly remained totally autonomous?

Turning now to my last illustration of duality of identity, let's consider Afro-Brazilian traditions from Bahia, in the northeastern coast of the country. It is common knowledge that the state of Bahia with a majority of the population of Black African descent holds the most traditional Afro-Brazilian musical culture and expression. What is less known is that the same population engages regularly in dramatic performance events and practices several musical genres and several instruments related to an essentially Iberian tradition, the very same performative activities found among mestizos, *caboclos*, and *caipiras* of other regional settings in the country. The *marujada* or *chegança de marujos* (also known as *chegança de mouros*) is a dramatic dance or *bailado* probably introduced during the colonial period by Christian missionaries. Thus the subject matter of most dramatic dances is conversion and resurrection. These dance-dramas clearly cut across ethnic boundaries because as a form of popular religious theatre developed for instructional purposes they affected Indians, Black slaves, and mestizos alike throughout the colonial period. They generally celebrate Iberian traditions of confrontations and fights between Christians and Moors (or infidels). The *marujada* specifically dramatizes the struggle of the Portuguese in their conquest of the sea and their maritime exploits (since the late fifteenth century). In addition, the sailors (*marujos*) or Portuguese [hence Christians] confront the Moors, with actual battles in which the Moors are either taken prisoners or symbolically killed only to resurrect as converted Christians. All wear appropriate costumes (generally Brazilian navy uniforms for sailors and officers). The singing alternates between soloists (the main characters of the drama) and chorus (sailors) in a repertory of songs in rather typical Portuguese style (including once more the ever-present parallel folk polyphony). The dramatic performance involves a sequence of choral numbers, solo songs, and spoken dialogues. The accompaniment is generally provided by small hand drums.

In considering such a performance, one wonders whether there might not be a blatant contradiction for the participants who, otherwise, are very much attached to their predominantly Afro-Brazilian religious and secular activities and dance and musical styles. After all, the *marujada* and other dramatic dances were meant as the dramatized struggle between good (Christians) and evil (non-Christians including Afro-Brazilian religions). It is obvious that the violent lessons of colonialism required indigenous peoples to succumb politically and spiritually through those dance dramas in which they enacted their own submission and defeat. But what is there to believe

when such activities continue in contemporary times? What might be their current meaning for the participants? It is anything but resistance and anything but discrepancy. Rather, Black Brazilians have tacitly recognized that their expressive culture is multivocal, most likely because they have long understood that as Brazilians they are neither Africans nor Portuguese. In other words, being Brazilian implies polysemous and subtle overlappings of various levels of identity, just as racial or ethnic self-identities result in very complex ambiguities.

Anthropological and ethnomusicological inquiry into black traditions in the Americas has frequently been limited to debates on how to quantify Africanisms against Europeanisms in religion, ritual, dance, music, and aesthetics in general. Such terms as “native America,” “Hispanic-America,” “Ibero-America,” “Afro and African-America,” or “Euro-America” are all indicative of a generic original source of culture. But traditions may come from any source. As mentioned by Norman Whitten and Arlene Torres (1992, 22), “Black Bermudans’ fondness for English Cricket is no less ‘theirs’ in the late twentieth century than white Mississippians’ taste for okra (brought by black Africans to the Americas).” American contemporary society is indeed made of hyphenated citizens! Not so in most countries of Latin America.

It stands to reason that if we are to understand better and to represent more honestly and accurately the musical cultures of Latin America and perhaps the whole of the Americas, we must rethink critically the old paradigms that were forged during the last few generations on the anvil of Eurocentric and North American-centric perceptions and assumptions. At its basis, such critical re-thinking requires a deeper penetration into the “realities” of the societies or social groups we study (ideological, socio-economic, and political), their past, and their present as revealed through the expression of their musical identity. The “native” voice, native motivation, and resulting strategy of expression need to have a larger place in our conceptual re-mapping of borders and boundaries and their obvious and constant overlappings.

Actually we would do well to realize that the old boundaries and borders tend to fade away as people more and more share the same space and more frequently rely on several existing traditions and create new ones. The study of specific popular musical expressions of the recent and current sociopolitical life of major cities in Latin America reveals an unsuspected fragmentation in aesthetic choices along more or less well defined lines of political ideologies in terms of social stratification, regionalism, generations, and less often religions and ethnicities. This fragmentation is creating a multiplicity of parallel popular music expressions and trends to which one would be hard put to apply a specific and accurate label (although the music industry invents labels all the time!).

The implications for the study of these “realities” are numerous, but it

stands to reason that the main areas of inquiry for the penetration of these “realities” will continue to be history and ethnography, and, in particular, the ethnography of musical performance which since the early 1980s has been articulated from various disciplinary viewpoints. Actually, together with a number of colleagues in folklore studies, anthropology, “sociomusicology” (the term used by Charles Keil and Steven Feld in the 1980s), and ethnomusicology, I have advocated since that time a performance- and listener-centered approach to inquiry into music “as a total social life of organized sounds” to use the appropriate terms of Feld (1984). As there are radically different ways of viewing and understanding the world, one should consider the various theoretical and methodological factors that might support such an approach by raising questions pertaining to the relationships of “sound organizations as socially organized” and “meanings of sounds as socially meaningful” (Feld 1984), but not conceived as resulting from unilinear processes. Feld himself warned that

for any given society, everything that is socially salient will not necessarily be musically marked. But for all societies, everything that is musically salient will undoubtedly be socially marked, albeit in a great variety of ways, some more superfluous than others. (1984, 406)

Thus, the important consideration here is how performance may bring into focus the complexity of such relationships. This is where the contribution of the ethnography of musical performance appears quite useful, as it conceptualizes performance as an organizing principle, a process and an event in which human actors interact according to specific rules or codes. In addition, practices of performance result from the relationship of content and context. It is easy to contend that the sound phenomena remain our primary source of study, and that practice can only be ascertained through the minute examination and measurement of sound, but the study of performance practice involves numerous levels of analysis so as to consider the multidimensionality of music. Moreover, no one can deny that performance practice (in its traditional sense) exists only in oral tradition. This is why the distinctions made between written and oral traditions of music have been overstressed. The dynamic oral tradition of performance behind all notational systems is subject to change in time and space. And this tradition certainly represents one of the essential sources for the study of cultural values, communication, and meaning. Such a study becomes more complex when we turn our attention to the listener’s cognitive process of perception which might constitute our first level of consideration in musical analysis in general. In doing so, we would turn away from the traditional decontextualized musical trait listing and move toward a socially relevant focus on the perceptual mediators of musical materials and events. There is no time here to develop in more detail the numerous ramifications of a performance- and listener-centered approach to the

analysis of music. But, for the topic at hand, such an approach has enormous potential in helping to situate in realistic terms the various continua of Latin American musical traditions, to represent them accurately in actual interpretive analyses by concentrating on “native” music performances and on individual “native” listeners’ perceptions of these performances, from which the musical life of a society and the social life of its music can be better understood and therefore better explained.

Note

- * This is a revised version of a lecture presented at the City University of New York-Graduate Center in October 1998 as part of the series “Perspectives 1998” to commemorate the thirty years of the Doctoral Program in Musicology at that institution. Portions of this lecture were also presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology held in Los Angeles in 1995.

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