

31. THE SHAPE OF THE STORY: SOME REMARKS ON HISTORY

SHOULD ETHNOMUSICOLOGY BE ABOLISHED?

We come to the end of this group of thirty-one chapters, each devoted to a principal issue or concept or question of ethnomusicology, most of them looking at this field as a phenomenon of the twentieth century – the whole twentieth century – trying often to see continuities and changes, taking in most respects an historical perspective. What now is the shape of our story? I'm trying four approaches – the history of our identity, the relationship to musicology, a periodization, and the questions we have been asking in the past and the present.

One of the central issues has been where in the academy ethnomusicology belongs. Vignettes from the 1970s: A friend accompanied me to a meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology. "Good heavens, it certainly is colorful," was his comment upon seeing professional-looking types delivering papers in one room, a group of dashiki-clad Anglo-Americans playing enthusiastically in an ensemble of drums, bells, and rattles before an obviously empathic audience in the next, and some students in jeans looking at kits for making sitars at a table in the hall. Then, upon attending a panel discussion, he gave a different sort of comment: "They're wonderful people, but each of them knows something different, and there doesn't seem to be much that they all know." Not necessarily an exaggeration. At another meeting, I heard: "The development of ethnomusicology is the most significant thing that has happened in musicology since 1950." A statement made by a music historian. And at a third: "Should ethnomusicology be abolished?" Title of a panel (and a publication by Lieberman 1977). No one wanted physically to remove the ethnomusicologists. But wasn't it perhaps time to call them, again, just plain musicologists, or anthropologists, or whatever it was that they came from? On the other hand, panels at the 2002 meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology were titled, "What Is Ethnomusicology Doing in a Music Department?"

And similar questions are raised elsewhere. It would be tempting to make an anthology of writings that question the existence of ethnomusicology, but let me mention only a sharp exchange in the German journal *Musikforschung* (particularly Greve 2002 and the main rejoinder, Brandl 2003), in which it is suggested that ethnomusicology has no future, has done what it can do, was perhaps something of an aberration. There are a number of ways in which the continued desirability of our field could be discussed, but in much of the critical literature it's not clear whether 1) what the people who have called themselves ethnomusicologists do shouldn't have been done, or 2) because of recent culture change, their task is no longer available, 3) they have accomplished what they set out to do and they should hang up their hats, 4) they should have no standing as a specialized field, 5) their existence has been all along a political gesture no longer valid; 6) as suggested above, they have enough in common to deserve to have a name, whether 7) they have all along been part of the political and economic oppressors and should stop, or stick to European research; and there are other questions.

All together, though, we have to ask whether ethnomusicology has developed into a coherent field, and whether we know what that field is. The implication of the vignettes of my emergences is that there sometimes appears to be little to hold ethnomusicology

together and much to tie it to older, more established fields. It is a tempting suggestion. One might be able to separate those interested in serious scholarship from those seriously interested in hearing interesting music or learning to play and sing. There seem to be many people doing many different things, some of them intellectually more removed from each other than any one of them is from conventional historical musicology, music theory, anthropology, folklore. As for the scholars, their approaches and their substance can be of great service to these disciplines, and they would in turn benefit from exchange. It is gratifying to realize that now, more than in the past few decades, the ideas which are the stock in trade of ethnomusicology have begun to have an impact on related fields.

If it is true that there's little that ethnomusicologists have in common, then surely the disciplinary identity of ethnomusicology, its own unity and its relationship to other fields would be among of the major issues of debate, past and present. But I would assert that ethnomusicology has a unified past and a tradition which is to a considerable degree its own. It has its distinct history of ideas, its culture heroes and heroines, its landmarks, its moments of glory and of pathos -- a story with a distinctive shape.

It's a history closely tied at many points to that of other disciplines. Vincent Duckles (in Brook and others 1972:39) suggested that in the nineteenth century and earlier, seven main motivations set the stage for musicological inquiry including among them the music of the ancients, the discovery of world music, and the discovery of national song, all clearly leading to what later became ethnomusicology, along with more specifically historical drives such as chant reform and the arts of custodianship. The people who did most to found the discipline of musicology -- the likes of Guido Adler and Charles Seeger -- contributed as well to the development of ethnomusicology. On the other hand, anthropology has also been centrally involved; a large proportion of the intellectual leaders have come from training in anthropology, and the rest have read their share of anthropological literature. Major figures -- Herzog, Merriam, Blacking come most immediately to mind, but there are dozens more among our leadership -- considered themselves anthropologists in the first instance.

But the history of ethnomusicology is not simply that of a subdivision of musicology and/or anthropology. Nor is it simply the sequence of events in the research of individual world areas. If it makes sense to view the history of our field as a unit, it is so because there our story is shaped by events of general significance to all who identify themselves with it. Contributions to ethnomusicological insight go back to the Renaissance (see Harrison 1973). It was, however, in the period in which it developed as a distinct field, between 1880 and 1900, that a group of first paradigms was established. Most important among them was a consensus to the effect that in certain ways, at least, it was reasonable to consider all musical systems as equal. The implications of cultural evolutionism, leading through various stages to the rational tonal system of modern Europe, had been dominant in the nineteenth century and has, for that matter, continued its effect. But at some point there emerged the belief that all musical systems -- as represented particularly by the parameter of scales and tone material -- were equally natural or, if you will, equally unnatural. The influential publication that resulted in this acceptance was A. J. Ellis's study "On the Musical Scales of Various Nations" (1885), and from that time stems a general belief in relativism as at least the intellectual point of departure. The decade of the 1880s also saw the first attempts at broad synthesis (Baker 1882), specialized monograph (Stumpf 1886), and field recording (1890). And soon after -- just a century ago -- Hornbostel (1905-6) began his first, modestly couched article (actually a lecture) on the nature of the field, suggesting the establishment of new paradigms, with a bit of heraldry:

"A new field within an established discipline is obliged to justify its right to existence." The ensuing history has been frequently touched upon on these pages and won't be rehearsed here, but it has continued to be dominated by certain abiding issues, such as the interface between cultural insider and outsider, the significance or the uselessness of conceptual boundaries of all kinds, music as the sphere of the individual or the community, the validity or falseness of universals, and a special methodology that includes fieldwork and transcription and other techniques – issues that give our field its special character among the many intellectual streams pursuing the comprehension of music.

AMONG THE MUSICOLOGIES

If the decades around 1900 are the period of the first paradigms, a second high point of our history come some fifty years later, after World War II. It is at this point that the issue of "where do we belong" came more prominently into the foreground. Let me approach the issue by giving a personal account. When I was a student at Indiana, the first to undertake specialization and dissertation work in ethnomusicology, the name had been invented but wasn't yet very current, and we called it comparative musicology, and my principal teacher, George Herzog, a professor of anthropology, used to call it "the comparative field." In my last years of study, I took mostly anthropology. But my degree was in music, and there was never any doubt in my mind that I was a kind of musicologist – one that had to know something about anthropology and folklore and linguistics, but certainly a kind of musicologist (while some of my colleagues, similarly outfitted, never questioned that they were anthropologists). This breadth of approach -- should I call it ambivalence? Or ambiguity? Or is it a kind of ambidexterity? Or in some ways, maybe ambition, or maybe even its very large ambit -- has been the paradigm of ethnomusicology in its history in the United States.

Writing the title of this section, I think in my unconscious I was remembering a Nova program called "Cheetah among the Lions," depicting a rather sad situation in an African valley in which a small group of cheetahs were constantly being pursued and persecuted by a larger group of more powerful lions, and they could only survive on their wits and their exceptional speed. The zoologist-narrator suggested that the lions feared that allowing the cheetahs to multiply would cut dangerously into the food and water resources of the lions. A strange and unsympathetic association, I admit.

Well, the field that has accepted the ideas and concepts of ethnomusicologists and welcomed them as colleagues most is the field of general musicology. When I was a graduate student in the school of music, in the early 1950s, I was readily accepted by the musicologists as one of them, and we musicologists all made common cause against the rest of the music students who looked down on us as mere scholars who would just get in the way of playing and singing. But looking for a teaching job was another story. Interviewed by administrators, I was told that there are hardly any jobs in music history; but that stuff I was doing, whatever you call it, there would never be any jobs! And when a job came along – for myself, and for some colleagues – the musicologists sometimes worried. Do we really need someone to teach only courses on non-western and folk traditions? If one spoke of the need for a second ethnomusicologist to balance the five music historians, one heard, "The ethnos are taking over." There was a time when the lions-and-cheetahs metaphor actually seemed to apply.

True maybe of the 1950s. But not in earlier times. The predecessors of

ethnomusicology before and shortly after 1900 seemed actually to be central to the developing musicology. Let's look for a moment at the history of musicology. The first two volumes of the *Vierteljahrschrift für Musikwissenschaft* (1885, 1886), the first serious and comprehensive journal in musicology, contain 23 articles, and of these five could be considered old-time ethnomusicology. Anthropology was involved early on, too, with figures such as Alice Fletcher, and Carl Stumpf, A. J. Ellis, Otto Abraham, and even Erich von Hornbostel had non-musical disciplinary allegiances. But in the end, I am convinced, all of them saw themselves as contributing principally to the field of music. Later, in the 1930s, when the predecessor of the AMS, the New York Musicological Society, was formed, its principal actors were theorists such as Joseph Yasser and Joseph Schillinger, composers such as Henry Cowell, librarians such as Harold Spivacke and (then) Oliver Strunk, ethnomusicologists such as George Herzog and Helen Roberts, and only a couple of traditional historians, along with the great generalist Charles Seeger. How American musicology changed from a field in which various types of musicology were more or less evenly represented to one in which historians of Western art music were numerically dominant has to do with the immense diaspora of European humanistic scholars from Europe fleeing Nazism and Fascism, the Holocaust, and war.

But indeed, from a small and evenly distributed field, musicology in the USA had, by the early 1950s, become largely historians of Western art music who were ambivalent about the contributions to their general enterprise that could be made by students of non-Western musics. Ethnomusicologists responded in several ways. One was to establish first the Ethnomusicology Newsletter in 1953, then SEM in 1955 -- an SEM that at first lived under the protective wing of the AAA. Second, a school, if you will, of ethnomusicology developed that looked at the music of non-Western, largely Asian cultures from the perspective that they perceived was taken by historians of Western art music, and by music department in general. This was the school developed in the first instance by the programs at UCLA, and secondarily at Wesleyan, Michigan, and Seattle, and it had two principal characteristics. One was the privileging of art or classical traditions, with an interest in showing that they excelled by standards similar to those that used by historians of European traditions. And second, since music historians were always expected to exhibit a minimum of competence performing Western music, the idea of teaching non-Western traditions through performance by Americans was heavily promulgated. In the United States, through the 1960s and 1970s, two somewhat contrastive approaches, headed respectively by Alan Merriam and Mantle Hood, vied for students to become anthropological or musical ethnomusicologists.

But musicologists have always, since the earliest publication defining the field, in 1885, claimed to include in their formal self-definitions the kinds of things that ethnomusicologists do -- study the world's musics from a comparative and relativistic perspective, and study music in or as culture, and include all of the different kinds of music in a society under their purview. Never mind that they don't always adhere to these criteria. And so it has happened that ethnomusicology has come to have a much greater effect on the field of music than on anthropology and other social sciences. It seems that by now, in many institutions, one can't be a "complete musicologist" without knowing something about ethnomusicology. At the same time, anthropologists are glad to have ethnomusicology around and available but most feel that they can, personally, live without it. Interestingly, music department people think of ethnomusicology as an anthropologically-oriented field; to them, one of the benefits of ethnomusicology is that it brings anthropological perspectives into their lives.

Where are we now? These two approaches had too much to give to each other to remain separated, and by the 1980s, a kind of mainstream had become established in practice, and even more in training. The typical student, by the 1980s, got involved in performance, at school and in the field, and also read a great deal of anthropology; and I guess by now, even though there are misgivings about the authenticity of gamelans and mbira ensembles at American and European schools, and about the usefulness of critical theory, and so on, a kind of mainstream type of ethnomusicologist developed. But I don't think any more that when members of SEM got together, there was hardly anything that you could reasonably expect all of them to know about. Now there is, I feel, a shared core of knowledge and commitment.

Of course the activities of the typical ethnomusicologist changed enormously. I can hardly enumerate the ways. Let me try a couple: Preserving the world's music: from field to an interest in the recordings, LPs, CDs, videos, produced by societies for their own use. From transcription we've gone on to a larger arsenal of techniques. From being the scientists confronting the interpretive music historians to being – along with anthropologists – the interpreters. At one time, synchronic and diachronic were the distinctive labels; now, we ethnos are just as much concerned with history as those other historians. From eschewing popular and culturally mixed musics as inauthentic to a focus on how musics and musical cultures affects each other.

And so I come back to my contention that ethnomusicology has had a lot of effect on musicology, and on music. Of course, music historians think of ethnomusicology as a "smaller" younger brother, though the label of youth is not particularly justified, considering that both areas tend to use 1885 as a kind of starting date. Ethnomusicologists think of the interests of most music historians as arcane, dealing with a corner of music that's definitely admirable but of interest to a small minority. And the people who are called systematic musicologists -- those working in the fields of psychology of music, psycho-acoustics, cognitive studies and the like -- see themselves as the quintessential musicologists who are concerned with the most fundamental questions of all. But they've tended to come together, in books such as *Rethinking Music*, Cook and Everist (1999), which undertook to assess in 24 essays the state of music scholarship, six essays by out-and-out ethnomusicologists, about eight by scholars well-known as historians, and the rest by theorists, semioticians, students of popular culture. This compendium reflects developments in other major research tools. The revered *Grove's Dictionary of Music in Musicians*, once a haven for true believers in the exclusivity of the western art music canon, was enormously enlarged in 1980, including for the first time long and authoritative articles on the musics of the world's cultures, and on vernacular traditions. In 2001 the next edition appeared, enlarged from twenty to 29 volumes, half of the enlargement devoted to longer and more thorough coverage of musics outside the canon.

Giving more space to ethnomusicology is fine. But is there really a substantive rapprochement? How is anthropological perspective brought to the humanistic historians? Are the two doing things that are more alike than they used to be? Let me mention two areas which suggest that the answer is affirmative:

In the 1980s there developed a movement in general musicology that began to call itself the "new musicology." Related to so-called post-modern movements in other humanistic fields, it began to move into new areas: busting the traditional canons of great music; getting into gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, critical theory, cultural criticism, many kinds of interpretation, some in my view very insightful and others totally off the wall. And maybe most important, the understanding that music can be understood

fully only if one takes into account the culture from which it comes, in which it does its work, which it affects and constructs it. Where did they get these ideas? Well, they've never been quite absent among historians, and not many of them have told me that it was reading ethnomusicology that brought them to these interests. But the "new musicology" bears many relationships to the "old" ethnomusicology, and while some historians haven't liked to hear me say, "but we've always known or believed that," this turn of events provides lots of common ground, common areas of interest. One of the dramatic moments in this rapprochement occurred at a 1993 meeting of the AMS at which a plenary panel titled "Music Anthropologies and Music Histories" by five scholars, two ethnomusicologists, two historians, and a theorist – but you couldn't tell them apart – was attended by hundreds, the subjects – Renaissance perceptions of ancient Mexico, Western ideas of African rhythm, jazz, 18th-century opera, and Indian music scholarship -- were all analyzed with approaches of postmodern interpretation. There's no doubt that the emergence of the new, postmodern musicology has drawn music historians and ethnomusicologists together.

The other movement concerns a smaller number of scholars, but I feel that it's equally significant in cementing the interaction of musicology and ethnomusicology. Mentioned from other perspectives in Chapter 14, it's what we sometimes call "ethnomusicology at home," and it concerns – as the term suggests – the ethnomusicological study of our own backyard. They had worked in their "backyard" for a long time – from taking a bus from Seattle to a Native American reservation thirty miles away, to traveling across town to ethnic enclaves – and this of course continues. But I'm talking about investigation of our true backyard, the musical culture of academic institutions and the music with which they are most associated, and from which a large proportion of ethnomusicologists come. I think that the first important study of Western art music culture by an ethnomusicologist was Henry Kingsbury's (1988) study, begun as a dissertation under Alan Merriam, dealing with a music conservatory in the Eastern U. S. I tried my hand at this, trying to interpret Western art music culture as a tug of war between the values – as we interpreted them, these composers were probably very different from the picture we conventionally have – the values of Mozart and Beethoven (Nettl 1995) Kay Shelemay (2001) worked with the early music movement in Boston, and students at Illinois did ethnography in musical institutions, including the university's, in our town of Champaign-Urbana (Livingston et al 1992). In various other ways, "ethnomusicology at home" made rapprochements with historians of Western music who, themselves, began to interpret what they found in ways related to the ethnographies of ethnomusicologists. And of course they all were also influenced and inspired by the directions of folkloristics, especially as a field focusing on the analysis of performance.

A GRAND MARCH

Let me add to these comments, with their attempts to present identities and paradigms, the suggestion that the shape of our story comprises four periods overlapping but nevertheless distinct.

The first is one of initial examination and discovery, and of generalization. It is characterized by the attitudes that non-Western and folk musics are worthy of study, that comparisons among them can be made and historical insights gained from them, and that a relativistic approach is best. It includes separation of field and laboratory work, and the insistence on the collection and preservation of authentic artifacts. We still have much

from this early period with us. But soon (perhaps beginning by the 1930s) a second period, one of greater specialization replaced it. The leadership of a Hornbostel, trying his hand at many cultures, was replaced by individual and idiosyncratic research by many scholars, each devoted perhaps throughout a career to one or two of the world's societies. This approach seems to have culminated in the 1950s and 1960s, but it too is very much with us still.

More recently, perhaps beginning in the middle 1960s, a third period emerged. It is one of consolidation of gains from the many specialized studies and of resumed and increased interest in generalized theory and methodology. Old problems are brought back and viewed with greater sophistication: the matter of origins of music, universals, comparative study. There are attempts to be nomothetic about the way in which music is related to culture. Analytical approaches from linguistics and semiotics begin to play a major role. Scholars are still interested in how a particular culture and its musical system work, but this interest is tempered by a conviction that their own approaches and procedures must be carefully honed to produce credible findings and interpretations.

There's a fourth period, and maybe we're just getting into it (though there may be some who wish we were already getting out of it), and that is in any event difficult to characterize accurately. It is dominated on the one hand by the emphasis on theory, a term perhaps better rendered as "positions from which interpretations emerge," and the insistence on interpretation of data – rather than positivistic presentation of data – as the principal purpose. Compared to music historians and music theorists concerned with analysis, ethnomusicologists have perhaps always emphasized "theory," have always taken into account the fact that the observer's position determines the way data is perceived and interpreted. Nevertheless, the insistence on interpretation on the basis stances derived from social theory whose purpose is both intellectual and practical is one important feature of contemporary scholarship. But this fourth period is also characterized by the enormous changes – the result of economic, political, and technological forces – that the world of music has undergone in the last few decades, changes that require us to find new ways of perceiving and interpreting the world of music.

If we can look at our history as a series of contrastive periods, we can also look at it as a kind of grand march, consisting of a mainstream of paradigms articulated by a dominant group of scholars whose work is of abiding value, but a stream with great diversity of ideas and methods, though with considerable unity of purpose, a march which was periodically slowed or speeded by intellectual revolutions. Looking back, I think we have been concerned mainly with three very broad questions: 1) What is it that causes different cultures to have differently sounding music? Or, what determines a culture's principal musical style? 2) What do the world's peoples use music for? What does music do for them? And 3) How do the world's musics transmit themselves, maintaining continuity and also engaging in change? These questions were the ones that dominated our thinking in the 1950s, and they were in the background of the lectures we heard from our teachers in the period in the period of great expansion after 1950. These questions are still around.

But also, there are questions we were not asking fifty years ago, issues we were not debating in 1950, questions that have come to the foreground in recent years and to which the field will increasingly turn for giving itself direction. Here are some of them, under the rubrics of ethics, technology, and education.:

1) The role of ethnomusicologists in relation to the people in their field of study, for which the word "ethics" has become a shorthand.. What are our obligations to the people,

the musicians, whose music we have studied? What is our role in the protection and use of intellectual property? When I was a student, the question of performers' or informants' rights played a very small role; we dealt with artifacts far more than people. What are the roles of cultural insiders and outsiders, and can we make such a distinction? In the 1950s this was not an issue widely recognized; in the 1970s, it began to play a role, but we continue not too successfully to grapple with the issue of participant-observation, the question of who speaks for a culture, the definition of culture -- is it what people in a society agree on, or what people in a society argue about?

2) The relationship of ethnomusicology to the technologized world. I'm an old-timer and thus quite ignorant of this area, so let me just say that ethnomusicological study of recording, distribution, globalization, the role of the Internet, are essential for giving us an understanding of today's musical culture. A good many younger scholars have bitten off parts of this new puzzle, but obviously we're just at the beginning. As a basis, though, let me point out that on the one hand the distinctions among musical cultures seems to be receding and musical variegation is maybe declining. On the other hand, the typical individual in the world has access to a vastly greater variety of music than was the case fifty years ago. So we must be concerned with control and ownership, and with the effects of recording and computer technologies on the world's musical public and on ourselves.

3) The role of ethnomusicology in education. In the 1950s, the few of us beginning to teach were an academic luxury. When I told colleagues that we were the branch of musicology that was asking the most fundamental questions, I got curious stares. Now we're fulfilling requirements for world music to music educationists, foreign cultures in general education, an essential branch of musicology to musicology majors. But we should address ourselves to the task of influencing our neighboring disciplines and fields further. We should go further in persuading our music historian colleagues that approaches developed in ethnomusicology might be crucial in interpreting historical and recent events, and in issues such as the relation of performer and audience, the history of performance practice, and the reception of music. We should persuade psychologists and biologists interested, for example, in the origins of music and the relationship of animal sounds and human music that knowing something of the immense variety of the world's human musics, and the fact that each society has its own, unique configuration of the concept of music, would add to the sophistication of their theories. We should persuade anthropologists that they can learn easily to deal with music as a major aspect of culture, and that they must include it because music, as the anthropologist Paul Bohannon famously said, "has been proved one of the most diagnostic traits of any culture" (Bohannon 1963).

As the cheetahs of the academic valley surrounded by the lion musicologists -- and incidentally also by the tigers and foxes of anthropology, the bears of folklore, the elephants of the sciences -- we've survived and thrived, made our place. It's widely accepted that with its group of distinctive problems and approaches, ethnomusicology has made and continues to make distinctive contributions. The lions and the other creatures have been unexpectedly kind, and we cheetahs might be in danger of ourselves turning into lions, acting like kings of the valley with the dangers this implies. It may be a comforting feeling. But actually, I believe that we in ethnomusicology need continue being like the cheetahs, to maintain our intellectual swiftness and our disciplinary flexibility, and to learn further from musicology, folklore, anthropology, and other disciplines and fields more recently developed, in order to be able to continue our claim that we deal with the most fundamental issues for understanding the domain of music.