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ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I

Ethnomusicology

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Ethnomusicology, our topic, a broad and challenging topic, is the division of musicology in which special emphasis is given to the study of music in its cultural context – the anthropology of music. The term was coined in 1950 by the Dutch scholar, Jaap Kunst, to replace the label ‘comparative musicology’ (Ger. *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*), on the grounds that comparison is not the principal distinguishing feature of this work.

Ethnomusicology includes the study of folk music, Eastern art music and contemporary music in oral tradition as well as conceptual issues such as the origins of music, musical change, music as symbol, universals in music, the function of music in society, the comparison of musical systems and the biological basis of music and dance. Western art traditions are not ruled out, although few studies in this area have been conducted by ethnomusicologists. In general, music in oral tradition and living musical systems are the realms that have most appealed to ethnomusicologists. Often they have studied cultures other than their own, a situation that distinguishes this field from most historical musicology. As a consequence of its broad scope, definitions of ethnomusicology abound, ranging from ‘the study of music as culture’ and the ‘comparative study of musical cultures’ to ‘the hermeneutic science of human musical behavior’ (Alan Merriam, Bruno Nettl, Elizabeth Helser; in Merriam, 1977). Charles Seeger (1970) suggested that the term ‘musicology’ is more suitable for ethnomusicology, whose purview includes the music of all peoples of all times, than for historical musicology, which is limited generally to Western art music.

Although formal study is relatively recent, amateur interest in non-Western music dates back to the voyages of discovery, and the philosophical rationale for study of foreign cultures derives from the Age of Enlightenment. The *Dictionnaire de musique* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1768) reflects the spirit of the age by including samples of European folk, North American Indian and Chinese music. During the 18th and 19th centuries, missionaries, civil servants and world travellers took an interest in ‘exotic music’, resulting in studies of Chinese music by Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1735) and Joseph Amiot (1779), of Arab music by Guillaume-André Villoteau (1809) and Raphael Kiesewetter (1842), of Indian music by William Jones (1792) and Charles Russell Day (1891) and of Japanese music by Francis Taylor Piggott (1893).

As an academic pursuit, comparative musicology, like historical musicology, has a history of just over 100 years, dating from the landmark publication of the Viennese scholar Guido Adler, 'Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft' (1885). Adler lists the comparative study of non-Western music as a division of systematic musicology together with music theory, aesthetics and the psychology of music:

... die vergleichende Musikwissenschaft, die sich zur Aufgabe macht, die Tonproducte, insbesondere die Volksgesänge verschiedener Völker, Länder, und Territorien behufs ethnographischer Zwecke zu vergleichen und nach der Verschiedenheit ihrer Beschaffenheit zu gruppieren und sondern.

Comparative musicology has as its task the comparison of the musical works – especially the folksongs – of the various peoples of the earth for ethnographical purposes, and the classification of them according to their various forms (p.14; trans. Merriam, 1977, p.199).

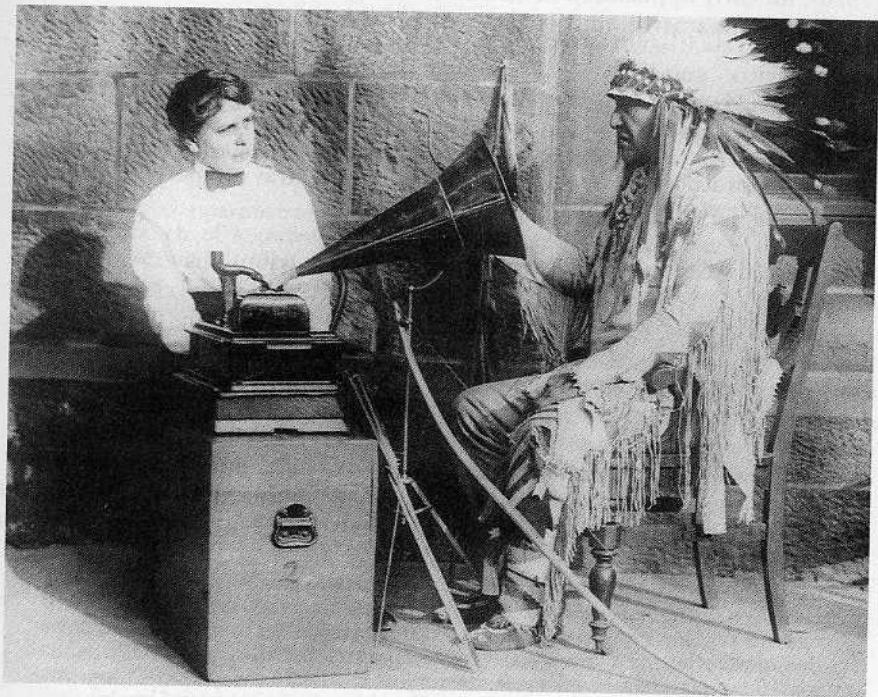
Scientific investigation of non-Western music was first made possible by two technical innovations of the late 19th century: the invention of the phonograph in 1877 by the American scientist Thomas Edison, and the development of the cents system of pitch measurement in 1885 by the English physicist and phonetician Alexander J. Ellis. The phonograph facilitated fieldwork, offering pioneering comparative musicologists the possibility of playback from which to transcribe and analyse. The cents system, by which the octave is divided into 1200 equal units, made possible objective measurement of non-Western scales. In 'On the Musical Scales of Various Nations' (1885), Ellis concludes that 'the Musical Scale is not one, not "natural", nor even founded necessarily on the laws of the constitution of musical sound, so beautifully worked out by Helmholtz, but very diverse, very artificial, and very capricious' (p.526). This finding brought into question the superiority of Western tempered tuning and led the way to open-minded cross-cultural comparison of tonal systems.

Musicologists of the 19th century quickly took advantage of these technological advances, recording small samples on wax cylinders which they added to their collection of musical artefacts – instruments, song notations and photographs. Many early cylinders were collected during general ethnological fieldwork. Psychologists and acousticians of the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, including Carl Stumpf (1848–1936) and Erich M. von Hornbostel (1877–1935), studied hundreds of cylinders recorded by German ethnologists in distant colonial territories. From analysis of this limited diverse material they posited ambitious theories about the distribution of musical styles, instruments and tunings – including evolutionary schemes and later *Kulturkreislehre* ('school of culture circles'). Scholars of the Berlin school rarely conducted fieldwork and thereby gave little import in their writings to music as a cultural manifestation (Stumpf studied the Siamese in 1900 during their Berlin tour; Hornbostel did visit the Pawnee in 1906).

Elsewhere in Europe during the 19th century, nationalism motivated a revival of interest in local folk song. In Hungary, Béla Vikár (1859–1945) began recording in the field in 1896. Béla Bartók (1881–1945) notated his first Hungarian folk song in 1904 and in 1905 began collaboration with Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967); from 1906, Bartók used the Edison phonograph in

Hungary, Romania and Transylvania. In England, Cecil Sharp (1859–1924) began the study of traditional English folk song during the same decade. In his search for old authentic material he visited the USA (1916–18) where he and his assistant Maud Karpeles (1885–1976) discovered some 1600 English tunes and variants. Harmonizing the material they had collected, Sharp fought for the introduction of folk song in English public schools. The Australian composer, Percy Grainger (1882–1961), emigrated to England where he began recording Lincolnshire folk song on wax cylinders in 1906 and issued in 1908 the first commercial recording of folk song, with the Gramophone Company, London. Nationalist composers throughout Europe turned to peasant song to enrich the classical musical idiom of their country. Composers and amateur collectors made arrangements of folk songs for piano or orchestra; from their love of indigenous folk music, composers also drew inspiration for new compositions based on folk idioms.

American studies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were practical, descriptive and based on fieldwork, particularly among the indigenous peoples at their doorstep, the American Indians. Early writings on Native American musical life were rich in data and lean in the speculative theories cultivated by contemporary German thinkers. Fearful that native cultures were vanishing, American scholars used the phonograph to preserve Indian music. The ethnologist Jesse Walter Fewkes (1850–1930) was the first



1. Frances Densmore with the Blackfoot Indian Mountain Chief at the Smithsonian Institution, March 1916, when he used sign language to interpret recordings of Indian songs played on an Edison phonograph

to use the Edison cylinder machine in the field during his research with the Passamaquoddy Indians of the northeastern USA (March, 1890) and later with the Zuni and Hopi Pueblos of Arizona (1890–91).

Especially sensitive American fieldworkers of this generation were women: Alice Cunningham Fletcher (1838–1923), noteworthy for her lifelong collaboration with the Omaha Indian Francis La Flesche (1857–1932), who is now recognized as the first Native American ethnomusicologist (Mark, 1982); and Frances Densmore (1867–1957; see fig.1), the most prolific collector of the period, for 50 years collaborator in the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution and author of over a dozen monographs on the Chippewa (1910–13), Teton Sioux (1918), Papago (1929), Choctaw (1943), Seminole (1956) and others. The anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) taught the holistic study of musical cultures through contemporary anthropological fieldwork methods to a new generation of students at Columbia University, including Helen Heffron Roberts (1888–1985) and George Herzog (1901–84; see fig.2). Roberts defined comparative musicology as studies that 'deal with exotic musics as compared with one another and with that classical European system under which most of us were brought up' (1936, p.233), a kind of definition later rejected by ethnomusicologists. Herzog, a German-Jewish émigré and assistant to Hornbostel, was the first to combine in his fieldwork the Boasian anthropological approach with the speculative theories of the Berlin school, a synthesis exemplified in 'The Yuman Musical Style' (1928), an early application in ethnomusicology of the culture-area concept. He saw comparative musicology as a field analogous to comparative linguistics:

There are many other musical languages, employed by Oriental and primitive-preliterate peoples. The study of these bodies of music is Comparative Musicology, which aims to discover all the variety of musical expression and construction that is to be found within the wide array of types of cultural development all over the world (1946, p.11).

Historical musicologists acknowledged the contributions of these early studies, finding in them evidence for the superiority of Western classical music – a judgement that ethnomusicologists would now avoid. In the first edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (1944), Willi Apel defined comparative musicology as 'the study of exotic music', and exotic music as 'the musical cultures outside the European tradition' (pp.167, 250). Glen Haydon's standard guide, *Introduction to Musicology* (1941), includes a chapter on comparative musicology and was one of several works during the 1940s that made a point of distinguishing folk music from primitive music and the music of high cultures:

Of the many ways of studying our art music systematically, one of the most enlightening is to compare it with folk music and non-European musical systems that have grown up more or less independently . . . Although a sharp delimitation of the various fields of comparative musicology is difficult to make, the main subdivisions of the subject are fairly clear. Non-European musical systems and folk music constitute the chief subjects of study; the songs of birds and phylogenetic-ontogenetic parallels are subordinate topics. The extra-European systems are further distinguished in terms of cultural

level and geographical distribution. As applied to musical systems, the term *primitive* is used in two senses; it may refer either to ancient or prehistoric music, or to music of a low cultural level. It is in the latter sense that primitive music is chiefly studied in comparative musicology. The music of the American Indians and the African Negroes, and many native peoples throughout the world may be classed as primitive if it is representative of a low degree of culture. Other musical systems studied are those of highly civilized peoples such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Indians. Folk music is usually studied in terms of national or racial distinctions and in terms of style-species or type (pp.216, 218-19).

But as scholars were pressing on with their new researches, the term 'comparative musicology' was found wanting. After World War II, two professional societies were founded: the International Folk Music Council in 1947 (after 1982, the International Council for Traditional Music) and the Society for Ethnomusicology in 1955. At the organizational meeting in Boston, SEM founding father David McAllester reported that the new field was to be defined not by the music under scrutiny but by a new methodology:

The proper subject matter for the society was discussed at length. The general consensus favored the view that 'ethno-musicology' is by no means limited to so-called 'primitive music', and is defined more by the orientation of the student than by any rigid boundaries of discourse . . . the term 'ethno-musicology' is more accurate and descriptive of this discipline and its field of investigation than the older term, 'comparative musicology' (1956, p.5).

The term 'ethnomusicology' gained currency in the mid-1950s (the hyphen was officially dropped by the Society in 1957), replacing 'comparative musicology'. Over and again the view was expressed, by George Herzog, Jaap Kunst, Willard Rhodes, George List and Curt Sachs that this study was no more comparative than all other fields of knowledge:

But today 'comparative musicology' has lost its usefulness. For at the bottom every branch of knowledge is comparative; all our descriptions, in the humanities no less than in the sciences, state similarities and divergences. Even in the history of music we cannot discuss Palestrina's Masses without comparing them with Lasso's or Victoria's or with his own motets. Indeed, all our thinking is a form of comparison: to speak of a blue sky is comparing it with a grey or a purple one. Walter Wiora is certainly right when he emphasizes that comparison can denote only a method, not a branch of learning (Sachs, 1961, p.15).

Many early definitions of ethnomusicology were scarcely different from those of comparative musicology, identifying the field as the study of primitive, non-Western, folk and Oriental musics.

The study-object of ethnomusicology, or, as it originally was called: comparative musicology, is the *traditional* music and musical instruments of all cultural strata of mankind, from the so-called primitive peoples to the civilized nations. Our science, therefore, investigates all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-Western art music. Besides, it studies as well the sociological aspects of music, as the phenomena of musical acculturation, i.e. the hybridizing influence of alien musical elements. Western art- and popular (entertainment-) music do not belong to its field (Kunst, enl.3/1959, p.1).

Other definitions of the new field stressed the importance of oral tradition:

Ethnomusicology is to a great extent concerned with music transmitted by unwritten tradition (List, 1962, p.24).

Another view was ethnomusicology as the study of music outside one's own culture:

Ethnomusicology is concerned with the music of other peoples . . . The prefix 'ethno' draws attention to the fact that this musicology operates essentially across cultural boundaries of one sort or another, and that, generally, the observer does not share directly the musical tradition that he studies . . . Thus it cannot surprise us that in the early stages the emphasis was on comparison, and the field was known as comparative musicology, until, in the 1960's, it was renamed (Wachsmann, 1969, p.165).

By the late 1950s American ethnomusicologists had divided into two camps: those with anthropological training, led by Alan Merriam (1923–80), and those with musicological backgrounds, led by Mantle Hood (b1918) (Merriam, 1969, 'Ethnomusicology Revisited'). In 1960 Merriam spoke as anthropologist when he defined ethnomusicology not in terms of subject matter but as 'the study of music in culture' (p.109). In 1973 he modified his definition to 'the study of music as culture' and in 1975 gave even greater emphasis to the cultural and social factors stating 'music *is* culture and what musicians do *is* society' (1977, p.204; 1975, p.57; see also Herndon and McLeod, 1979). He criticized the laboratory-based comparative research of the Berlin school in which 'cultural facts were applied more or less indiscriminately to "prove" the already deduced theory' (1964, p.52). Merriam regarded personal fieldwork as an essential part of any ethnomusicological study and proposed a model for the study of musical cultures – the investigation of concepts about music, musical behaviour and musical sound (pp.32–3).

In his dissatisfaction with deductive research, Merriam spoke for most American ethnomusicologists, who considered their current grasp of world music too sketchy to warrant theoretical generalization. Merriam's positivist and particularist approach was nurtured by an increase in fieldwork by scholars, made possible by the advances in commercial aviation following World War II. Studies written during the 1950s and 1960s reflect caution; most are self-contained ethnographic reports based on fieldwork in a particular tradition, an individual ethnic group or a geographic region, aimed at filling the gaps on a map of world musical styles.

Hood, like Merriam, objected to the comparisons of musical cultures undertaken by the earlier generation of musicologists on the basis of insufficient data:

An early concern with comparative method, before the subjects under comparison could be understood, led to some imaginative theories but provided very little accurate information. Nonmusical standards relating to economic status, technology, and relative social isolation were responsible for the general use of such terms as 'primitive music' and 'exotic music' . . . A vast number of musical cultures of the non-Western world are yet to be

studied systematically and the music of the European art tradition re-examined in the light of newly emerging concepts before comparative methods can 'give musicology a truly world-wide perspective' (1969, p.299).

The American musicological approach stressed mastery of a foreign musical language, 'bi-musicality' (an analogue to bi-linguality), through extended stays in the field of a year or more (Hood, 1960, 1971). This method had its rationale in the teachings of Charles Seeger (1886–1979), the Connecticut Yankee philosopher of musicology, who held that speech and music are incompatible modes of communication. This dilemma, which Seeger called 'the musicological juncture', left the scholar, who must use words to describe music, in a curious position.

Now, if we are to talk about music we must talk about it in terms of speech. Thus, these polarities, opposites, dichotomies and whatever tend to become regarded as properties or characteristics of the music compositional process. But if you will try to remember what the making of music was when you were making it at your best, most concentrated and probably, most free of extraneous mental activity or feeling, I wonder if you find analogs of the polarities, opposites, dichotomies and other paraphernalia of speech; or, if you do, that they were weak or perhaps obstructive intrusions of extraneous mental activity or feeling. I do. I run afoul of people who talk about meaning in music. If I understand rightly, the meaning of something is what it stands for, unless, by rare exception, it stands for itself, which is next to meaningless. I find that the imputed meaning of music is precisely that. Otherwise, meanings ascribed to the function of music in social contexts are speech meanings in speech contexts (1977, p.183).

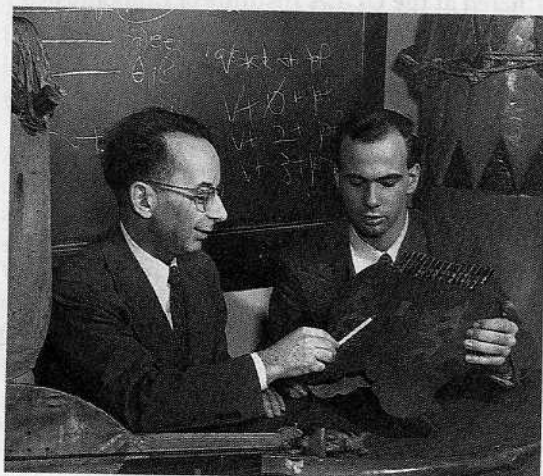
One solution Seeger proposed was the study of non-Western performance at home and in the field. Hood gathered at the UCLA Institute of Ethnomusicology a distinguished circle of foreign musician-teachers including José Maceda (Philippines), Kwabena Nketia (Ghana) and Hardja Susilo (Java). Beginning in 1960, Hood's programme offered instruction in Javanese, Persian, Japanese, Mexican, Indian, Balinese, Greek and African musics. The critical mission of ethnomusicology was explicit in his pronouncement of 1961, that 'in the latter half of the twentieth century it may well be that the very existence of man depends on the accuracy of his communications'. These words fired the imagination of American music students and university administrators alike, and ethnomusicology graduates from UCLA found jobs in major American universities. In the series of short articles in the inaugural issues of the *SEM Newsletter*, Hood was one of the first to proclaim ethnomusicology to be the study of any and all musics, paraphrasing the 'Report of the Committee on Graduate Studies', *JAMS*, 1955:

[Ethno]musicology is a field of knowledge, having as its object the investigation of the art of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural phenomenon. The [ethno]musicologist is a research scholar, and he aims primarily at knowledge about music (1957, p.2).

During the 1960s scholars continued to reject comparison as a feature of ethnomusicology. John Blacking (1928–90) argued against superficial comparisons based on statistical analyses of scales, intervals and rhythms:

If we accept the view that patterns of music sound in any culture are the product of concepts and behaviours peculiar to that culture, we cannot compare them with similar patterns in another culture unless we know that the latter are derived from similar concepts and behaviour. Conversely, statistical analyses may show that the music of two cultures is very different, but an analysis of the cultural 'origins' of the sound patterns may reveal that they have essentially the same meaning, which has been translated into the different 'languages' of the two cultures (1966, p.218).

A curious theme in the short history of ethnomusicology, explained perhaps by the insecurity of this fledgling discipline within the established academy, is the persistent preoccupation with definitions. Since Adler, various alternatives were proposed by the founders of the field: Jaap Kunst, Helen Heffron Roberts, Curt Sachs and Charles Seeger; and their students: Mantle Hood, George List, David McAllester, Alan Merriam, Bruno Nettl (see fig.2) and Klaus Wachsmann. After a century, it is still commonplace to read new publications laden with new definitions. These range from the grand to the petty: definitions of ethnomusicology alongside pedantic disputes over the status of the study (field or discipline, humanity or social science?), to exegeses of commonplace words (time, space and music), concepts for which the sometimes naïve ethnomusicologist claims a unique perspective. This dependence on definitions is not to be wondered at; a developing discipline that sets the entire world of music – past, present and future – as its province advisedly might seek an anchor. Fear of drowning in the ocean of world music, of the slippery subjective nature of cross-cultural research, of the elusive middle ground between the social sciences and the humanities has motivated ethnomusicologists to impose definitional limits in their work.



2. The ethnomusicologist George Herzog (left) with his student, Bruno Nettl, at Indiana University, 1950

The first assignment for a new student in ethnomusicology is customarily a rehearsal of the old definitions, from Adler to Seeger and beyond. The danger is that, like the craftsman who never advances beyond sharpening his tools, the initiate will never emerge from the sea of terminology: such a fate has

befallen some, who have modified definition with redefinition, sacrificing in this exercise the substance of inquiry. Against this risk must be weighed the benefit: that familiarity with the many definitions, greater and lesser, will reveal ethnomusicology to be a multi-faceted lens with abundant powers for diversity and idiosyncrasy, for imagination, intuition, insight and compassion. Definitions can tempt the wise student towards uncharted waters.

First on the agenda in the definitional debate was the search for that single word which identifies this diverse field. Not many scholars use the term ethnomusicology during their fieldwork. The dispute begins back at home in the university setting. There, ethnomusicologists have, since the 1950s, taken custodianship over those aspects of music study that have been long ignored or abandoned by the performers, historians and theorists of Western classical music – hence the hotchpotch of topics that make up our field and defy definition. How is it that the student of new Chinese folk songs is in the same fraternity as the student of old Chinese manuscripts? Yet, in the academy of the 1990s, they share a roof in the ethnomusicology division. Reason itself was on the side of Charles Seeger when he claimed that historians of European art music had ‘hijacked’ the comprehensive label, musicology, for their parochial pursuits. But other founding fathers of the field have a certain affection for the term ethnomusicology which recalls the pioneering spirit that led in the post-war years to the foundation of the Society for Ethno-musicology. Younger European and American scholars have taken up the identity of ethnomusicologist as the only tag they ever knew, and associate it with the convivial and stimulating environment of the annual meetings of the Society. It is easy to understand, however, the objection of scholars from non-Western continents, such as Africa and Asia (whose music by American consensus is thought to be the subject matter of ethnomusicology), to being identified as the ethno of our musicology.

In the 1990s, the conscientious ethnomusicologist is often at a loss for descriptive words to explain his enterprise, having been stripped during the last several decades of his working vocabulary of vivid, colourful terms. In the kingdom of exiled words live the labels condemned as pejorative: the old-timers, ‘savage’, ‘primitive’, ‘exotic’, ‘Oriental’, ‘Far Eastern’; some newcomers, ‘folk’, ‘non-Western’, ‘non-literate’, ‘pre-literate’; and recently ‘world’. ‘Traditional’ survived the trial of the 1970s, leaving ethnomusicologists with an impotent concept that refers, in the world of music, to everything and therefore nothing.

The nature of ethnomusicological studies has been transformed during the last 100 years, although the field has not yet ‘come of age’ (as was claimed at the 25th meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, 1980). Not only musicologists and anthropologists, but also music educators, music therapists, performers of non-Western music and composers who draw on non-Western and folk idioms are using the title ‘ethnomusicologist’. The armchair has been abandoned; scholars now conduct their own fieldwork, and experience first-hand the cultures whose music they analyse. Inevitably, this development has improved the standard of work and led to new understanding of the role of music in human life. But have the fundamental issues really changed? Hornbostel understood the insider–outsider debate; Robert Lachmann (1892–1940) saw that the concept of modality was uniform throughout West, South

and Southeast Asia; Sachs, in his later writings, argued that non-Western cultures were not 'progressing' towards a Western ideal. 'The grand old men really had the answers' (Nettl, 1975, p.70; personal communication, 1990).

We are filling gaps in the field, but there are times when the field of ethnomusicology seems to give us substantially no new ideas of what the world of music is like. Have we discovered all musics? I do receive many new ideas of how to work, ideas on methodology and theory, but the substantive descriptions of musical style and musical culture seem to me to have changed relatively little. After carrying out some studies in Persian and Arabic improvisation, I again looked into Robert Lachmann's little book, *Musik des Orients*, and realized that either explicitly or by implication he already, almost 40 years ago, had stated in a few sentences what I had stated in a series of articles (Nettl, 1975, 'The State of Research in Ethnomusicology', pp.70–71).

The 1970s and 1980s saw unification in ethnomusicological theory and method despite a diversification of topics. Anthropological and musicological concerns fused, interest shifted from pieces of music to processes of musical creation and performance – composition and improvisation – and the focus shifted from collection of repertory to examination of these processes.

New approaches to the analysis of music and of its cultural setting were used; these include aspects of cybernetics (the study of control systems), information theory (how information is generated, transmitted and stored), semiotics (the interpretation of phenomena in terms of signs and symbols) and structuralism (the identification of the structural rules governing cultural phenomena). Increased emphasis was placed on decoding the meaning of the musical message. New methods have also stimulated more rigorous musical ethnography, for example, the ethnography of musical performance (McLeod and Herndon, 1980) and the microethnographic analysis of the musical event (Stone, 1982).

Historical studies returned, making new demands on fieldworkers; for example, studies of modernization and Westernization (Nettl, 1985). New subjects came under investigation: ethnopoeitics and aesthetic anthropology (Feld, 1982), gender and music (Keeling, 1989), urban music (Nettl, 1978), the music of refugee populations, film music of India and Japan (Arnold, 1985; Skillman, 1986), the impact of tourism on music in rural and urban settings, street music and busking, and the new traditional musics – popular Westernized forms in burgeoning non-Western cities, including Latin salsa, African 'highlife', Congolese *jùjú*, *kwela* and *tarabu* (Blum, 1978; Waterman, 1985, 1990). Local cassette industries sprang up overnight in Africa and Asia (Wallis and Malm, 1984).

The international music industry brought a mixing and matching of musical styles that would have astonished early fieldworkers of the 20th century who searched in their travels only for idealized authentic folk music. Fieldwork took on a new dimension, as the field now comes to the scholar through media broadcasts and locally produced records; artists from Africa and Asia began to visit Western capitals on concert tours. As a consequence of international exchange and renewed ethical awareness, indigenous performers and informants were given recognition for their contribution to music scholarship (Nettl, 1984). In some cases the role of the ethnomusicologist has been to encourage the performer to write his or her own study: the

Navajo Blessingway singer Frank Mitchell produced an autobiography (1978) in collaboration with American scholar David McAllester and his student Charlotte Frisbie, and the book by the Scottish traveller Betsy Whyte (1979) was largely inspired by ethnomusicologist Peter Cooke of the University of Edinburgh. Ethics in fieldwork and research are receiving more attention, and attempts have been made to deposit copies of recordings and scholarly publications in archives and libraries of the countries under study.

New methods of field investigation were born of new technology; for example, Ruth Stone's video recording and playback in analysis of musical events among the Kpelle of Liberia (1982). To facilitate transcription of complex polyphonic, polyrhythmic compositions from the Central African Republic, Simha Arom (see fig.3) used stereo recording and audio playback techniques in the field, a method involving the musicians as 'true scientific collaborators' who 'assume totally the determination of the successive stages of the experimental work' (1976, p.495).



3. The technique of 're-recording' as practised by Simha Arom: the individual parts of two musicians from a horn orchestra of 18 instruments are recorded under the direction of the conductor (Banda-Linda, Central African Republic, 1974)

The interdisciplinary nature of ethnomusicology and the increasing diversity of methods and theories led George List, in the late 1970s, to state it was no longer possible to draft a single sensible definition of the field:

That field of study known as ethnomusicology has expanded so rapidly that it now encompasses almost any type of human activity that conceivably can be related in some manner to what may be termed music. The data and methods

used are derived from many disciplines found in the arts, the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences. The variety of philosophies, approaches, and methods utilized is enormous. It is impossible to encompass them all within one definition (1979, p.1).

With innovative studies of modern musical life, the 1970s and 1980s also saw fieldwork resumed in societies largely untouched by Western life, for example Anthony Seeger's research among the Suyá, a remote community of the Amazon (1987), and Marina Roseman's study of the Temiar of the Malaysian rain forest (1984). Steven Feld had to master the local ornithology of the Kaluli people of highland Papua New Guinea, and Monique Brandily that of the Teda of Chad before either could understand these complex musical systems (Feld, 1982, 1988; Brandily, 1982). In isolated settings scholars adapted field techniques to suit the situation. Hugo Zemp elicited the rich detailed musical vocabulary of the 'Are'are people of the Solomon Islands during informal music and language lessons, rather than in formal interviews (1978, 1979, 1981). In these novel approaches, Wachsmann found a solution to the irreconcilability of speech and music, to Charles Seeger's 'thesis of the lingocentric predicament':

With the discovery of systematic, verbal references to music among the 'Are'are and Kaluli, Hugo Zemp and Steven Feld have provided us with remarkable, promising material of a kind and comprehensiveness that never before was available . . . Zemp and Feld present us with an entirely new game in which the significance of metaphor and synesthesia and the intimate link between music, speech, and the entire experience of ourselves play a central role (Wachsmann, 1982, pp.210-11).

Ironically, new approaches have led back to old issues; for example, comparison, which has returned, but in a new light. Can we compare the music of cultures that share similar social systems or environmental settings, such as music in small-scale egalitarian societies, or music of rain-forest dwellers, of urbanites, peasants and so on? In the mid-1970s, Nettl noted the rediscovery of comparative methods:

If we are discovering or rediscovering our own past, perhaps we are going back to earlier precepts . . . The reprinting of the work of such scholars as Hornbostel and Brăiloiu is a stimulus for those who feel that it is possible for someone to comprehend a number of musical systems sufficiently well to compare them . . . We are again returning to the idea that musics can be compared, that they lend themselves, at some level of study, to quantified comparison and that one is perhaps unable to absorb information about a new musical culture except by making implicit comparisons to something already known (1975, 'The State of Research in Ethnomusicology', p.71).

Beginning in the late 1970s, renewed enthusiasm was voiced for ethnomusicological studies of Western classical music, but little work was actually published in this area (however, see Wachsmann, 1981 and 1982; Herndon, 1988). Conversely, musicologists (perhaps with a glance over their shoulders at ethnomusicological methods) began taking greater cognizance of extra-musical factors, particularly social milieu, in their analyses of standard repertoires.

Beginning in the 1980s, the biology of music-making united ethnomusicologists with musicologists, performers and music educators, as well as psychologists and neurologists (Wilson and Rochman, 1988, 1990). Through team-work, fresh approaches were tested to understand the music-specific aspects of brain and motor functions. Ethnomusicologists contributed by comparing findings from different cultures, hearkening back, in spirit if not in method, to the cross-cultural psycho-acoustic studies of the Berlin school in the late 19th century. Are the basic biological functions of human musicality universal, or are they determined by culture? The old nature/nurture question was raised once again.

After a century of work, certain fundamental issues still occupy centre stage in ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists generally study non-Western and folk music, and are particularly interested in the match of cultural context to musical style. With the whole world as their oyster, and the essential links between music and the rest of life their abiding concern, ethnomusicologists have resorted to methods and theories from various allied disciplines. Many a recent article describes Mongolian or Bolivian or Samoan music in the terminology of linguistics, interactionism, phenomenological sociology, information theory, structuralism and so on and so on; this makes life hard for experts and amateurs alike, to say nothing of the musicians whose music is under discussion. Delving into the pages of the major periodicals of the field, *Ethnomusicology* and *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, is not light reading for anyone. After wading through pages devoted to definitions of familiar terms like 'performance', 'event' and 'assumption', you may unexpectedly find yourself drowning in a sea of undefined matrices and paradigms, pondering the nature of 'sonic ideation', 'cantometric profiles', 'thick description', or 'semiotico-cybernetic theory'.

In defence of my colleagues, one man's music (say, to the ethnomusicologist) may be another man's Call to Prayer (music is forbidden in Islam); in fact, the seemingly tedious review of first principles is perhaps the major contribution of ethnomusicology to music studies. But tedious it is, nonetheless, and particularly troublesome for editors of reference works such as *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (6th edn.), who seek out (not always in vain) contributors who can tell about another man's music in straightforward English without violating concepts peculiar to that culture.

Conflicts continue: between scholars searching for universally applicable systems of analysis and those attempting to use the cognitive framework of a particular culture as the basis for analysis of its music; between those who believe that detailed analysis of music leads to understanding and those who believe that music can be understood only on its own terms through performance. Although approaches vary and orientations differ, some tenets of ethnomusicology are held in common. Fieldwork remains the focal point of research, and each scholar is expected to collect his own material for analysis. Ethnomusicologists continue to acknowledge the value of written notation; some use mechanical music writers, including computers and the melograph, but a surprising number, armed with various special symbols, still rely on conventional Western notation.

At the very heart of ethnomusicology, the astute reader may discern the fundamental irony of the subject. On the one hand, each scholar is eager to defend the music of his or her own people as special and unique; on the other, no

ethnomusicologist will rank the music of his culture over that of his colleague's. Value judgements are not the fashion in today's ethnomusicology – a small price to pay for an even-handed treatment of the world's music. So ethnomusicologists, with their bewildering array of new topics, their barrage of jargon and their pedantic definitions find their place of pride as the great egalitarians of musicology.

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