



An Introduction to Ethnomusicology and World Music

- ◆ The musical scale is not one, not `natural' nor even founded necessarily on the law of the constitution of musical sound, so beautifully worked out by von Hornborstal, but diverse, very artificial, and very capricious. (Alexander Ellis, "On the Musical Scales of Various Nations", 1885)



A lecture on the methods of ethnomusicology and its development over time

- ◆ 1. Often seen as a branch of the academic study of music that is distinct, and in contrast to, that of historical musicology.
- ◆ 2. A subject area that has continually sought to re-define itself.
- ◆ 3. Developed from the comparative study of musical languages and traditions outside of Europe, into a general method or approach to studying all music.



Comparative Musicology

- ◆ The forerunner of ethnomusicology (before c.1950)
- ◆ Developed out of interest in `the exotic' and `the primitive' – e.g. French writers on Egyptian music in the Napoleonic era, accounts of explorers, French Encyclopedists
- ◆ Accounts strongly coloured by prevailing colonial attitudes of the day.



Birth of comparative musicology

- ◆ Same time that historical musicology got started as an academic study – 1880s
- ◆ 1885 scientific developments made it possible – Helmholtz's *The Sensations of Tone*; Alexander Ellis (founding father of subject) a physicist and phonetician – devised the cent system; above all the invention of the phonograph that allowed **recording**



Ellis's contribution



- ◆ Showed that many musical systems were not founded on the harmonic system.
- ◆ He showed that music is not an `acoustical fact' but a `social fact' – not something given by the laws of nature, but by consensus amongst groups of people.
- ◆ For this reason seen as `father of ethnomusicology'



The Phonograph

- ◆ Crucial for development of the discipline as it made a new kind of evidence available.
- ◆ Up to then traveler's accounts, 'exotic' musical instruments, and occasional performances were the basic material.
- ◆ Recordings and gramophone records of world musics available by 1900.



Recording Technology

- ◆ Lifted music out of its social context.
- ◆ Up until recording if you wanted to listen to music you had to enter into the social setting in which music was performed.
- ◆ This abstraction from the socio-cultural context transformed the role of music in the 20th century. Particularly affected popular music.



Berlin School of Comparative Musicology

- ◆ Flourished in first half of 20th century
- ◆ Interested in theories of music structure, acoustics, and psychology of music.
- ◆ Above sought a scientific approach – based on Helmholtz, Ellis etc.



The Psychology Institute in Berlin

- ◆ Psychologists interested in the relationship between music and the human mind. Saw that this had to involve the study of many human societies.
- ◆ Wanted to understand the fundamental nature and structure of music.
- ◆ Established a phonogram archive of wax cylinders. Armchair analysis and transcription into staff notation. Prolific publication. 9



Issues addressed by comparative musicologists

- ◆ Analysis of tonal systems.
- ◆ Modifications to staff notation.
- ◆ Classification of musical instruments (Hornborstal/Sacks system.
- ◆ Origins of music – from speech, from work, sexual display, Darwin's theories.
- ◆ Evolution of music. Theory that one can retrace the evolution of music from living musics.
- ◆ African music – polymetre, music and movement



Fundamentals of Comparative Musicology

- ◆ Concerned with music as a universal aspect of human behavior, with the origins and evolution of music, and with the place of music in the human mind.
- ◆ Laboratory analysis of sound recordings.
- ◆ Field of study defined in terms of categories of music – non-western, folk, oral tradition, etc
- ◆ Ignores the folk view, imposed an appropriate analytical framework, largely derived from Western music.
- ◆ Concern with evolutionism and theory of culture circles.

Transition to Ethnomusicology

- ◆ Precepts of CM fundamentally racist.
- ◆ An alternative approach developed by anthropologists working with North American Indians. Seen as a dying culture and languages. Nettles, Gilman, Fewkes, Densmore, Boas.
- ◆ Studies of folk music in Europe – collectors and developing theories of oral traditions.
- ◆ Work of Charles Seeger – father of Peggy, Pete, Mike etc- inventor of melograph, political sympathies

Start of Ethnomusicology

- ◆ 1950s and start of The Society and publication.
- ◆ Concerned with the study of 'music in culture'
- ◆ Defined as a method of study, not in terms of types of music to be studied.
- ◆ Utilises anthropological methods of research, with emphasis on participant observation.
- ◆ Music is viewed in relation to its socio-cultural context and analysed in terms of the processes that lie behind it.
- ◆ Lays great emphasis on the importance of the folk view, to apprehend the music from the inside.
- ◆ Dominated by major characters – Kunst, Merriam, Nettl, Seeger, Blacking, Hood,



Major Concerns

- ◆ With problems posed by the **participant observer**.
- ◆ With the **functions** that music serve in societies.
- ◆ With **enculturation** and **music education** within societies.
- ◆ With the **biology** and **cognition** of music making.
- ◆ Musical **psychology** and **musicality**.
- ◆ With **syncretism** and **acculturation**.

Ethnomusicology and World Music

- ◆ Rise of the commercial development of 'world music' in the 1980s and 90s has led to exploitation and a new set of problems, but also global awareness of non-western musics.

Some academics have returned to a more 'Comparative' approach under the guise of world music.

Breakdown of barriers between West and the rest of the world has changed old precepts.

In the new global era of the 21st century is there really a need for ethnomusicology, as is not all the study of musicology (if done well) ethnomusicology?