

Introduction: Canadian Perspectives in Ethnomusicology

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INTRODUCTION: CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer

This volume brings together a group of papers delivered by Canadian scholars at recent meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology (primarily the Toronto meeting of 1996 for which the co-editors of this special issue served as Chairpersons).¹ We think their compilation as this special issue of the *Canadian University Music Review* is significant for several reasons. First, this grouping of Canadian scholars makes readily evident that ethnomusicologists north of the 49th parallel are engaged participants in the important debates on cultural production and identity in the North American academy of the 1990s. Second, the subset of papers on topics located in Canada demonstrates the relevance and even the urgency of discussing these important issues in the context of musical communities in this country. That is, Canadian subject matter is encompassed, alongside subject matter from Asia and the Caribbean, within the discussion of localization and globalization. Third, the range of methodological and theoretical approaches which underlie this work is stimulating in itself. Documentary history, ethnographic description, social interactionism, and music theoretical work are included here.

The papers were obviously conceptualized independently. Hence, any coherence one might see in them is "imposed" by us, the editors and you the readers. Various sorts of structures overlay this body of work in ways which will hopefully prove useful from both research and pedagogical perspectives.

On the one hand, several area studies emphases are evident. Beaudry's paper could, of course, be read in a Native American "area studies" grouping together with that of Christopher Scales. Similarly, Marcuzzi's study could be juxtaposed with Gallagher's to reveal different perspectives on Cuban music cultures, and with Taranger's to constitute a Caribbean diaspora grouping. A significant grouping of Asian studies papers also emerges with McKinley, Ollikkala, and Rahn. And of course, overlapping with others is a Canadian

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studies grouping consisting of Beaudry, Gallagher, Greenhill, Scales, Smith, and Taranger.

On the other hand, a number of broad thematic interrelationships can be found among the papers; it is around this structure that we have chosen to group and order the papers. The first deals with cultural production, the second with musical performance, and the third with mediated musics.

The first group of papers is concerned with cultural production, defined variously but broadly to include the processes of creating and learning music, but also the processes of labelling music, and the politics of inclusion and exclusion. Brad Klump explores the history of labels imposed by the music industry. While such terms as “world beat” or “world music” have often been accepted as self-evident, Klump problematizes their origins and adoption, revealing how economics, social habit, and ideology intersect in the struggle to name hybrid music products in the 1980s and 1990s. He demonstrates the importance of careful historicization and the critical analysis of the exclusionary effects of specific naming practices.

Gordon Smith explores a different label in a different historical moment, but one with continuing valence: the concept of “folk” music in late nineteenth-century Quebec, in the wake of the publication of Ernest Gagnon’s important collection *Chansons populaires du Canada*. His account clarifies the diffuse array of song types gathered under this rubric and the socio-political usefulness of a concept and indeed a “cult” of a “folk” society. Smith’s work examines the ideology of a folk culture as a strategic one with economic as well as cultural ramifications.

Robert Ollikkala examines the construct of North Indian “light-classical” music, subjecting it to a broad-ranging investigation and, along with this, problematizing musical genre classification and classification systems at large.

Pauline Greenhill deals with the asymmetries of social groups in her comparative study of the Winnipeg Folk Festival and Folklorama. Like Klump, she looks carefully at labels, cognizant of the messages implicit in terms such as “multiculturalism,” “culture,” “ethnicity,” “pluralism,” “folklore,” “tradition,” and “identity.” As a discursive location, each festival is invested in power relationships that are maintained, challenged, or changed. Her analysis does not exempt her own academic participation from scrutiny. Hence, the local informs a much broader set of questions about performance, academic research, and social activism.

The second group of papers focuses more explicitly on performances, using ethnography to unfold the social and aesthetic action of Khmer wedding ceremonies (McKinley), African-Canadian gospel services (Taranger), and Cuban *batá* drumming (Marcuzzi). Kathy McKinley explains the importance of music performance and the presence of live musicians in ensuring the ritual efficacy of Khmer (Cambodian) weddings in Phnom Penh, where she conducted field work in 1994. Her detailed descriptive account, which reveals a keen eye for gender enactment, makes clear the interconnectedness of music with dance and drama, speech, instruction, and storytelling. The ritual hair-

cutting phase of the ceremony, a moment invested with special cultural meaning, is a central focus.

Angela Taranger's field work in a gospel church in Edmonton is arguably also in a "ritual" context. However, the interracial and multi-ethnic membership of this "African-Canadian" congregation precludes a priori assumptions of shared culture. Rather, she examines the confrontation of difference and the construction of community by means of musical (and other) performance modes, modes which may be transformed or inverted relative to "mainstream" musical expectations. She uses Steven Feld's theory of interpretive moves to make social sense of the interactions of this diverse congregation.

Michael Marcuzzi examines the role of voice-and-percussion ensembles in the practices of a prominent Afrocuban socio-religious group, Lukumí. In a wide-ranging discussion, he ties together musical practices, divination, trance/possession phenomena, and aspects of Yoruban-based contemporary Afrocuban cosmology.

The final group of papers looks at issues of mediation, defined as an interface between live performance and listeners. Of course, some earlier issues—shared power-laden concepts, labelling practices, and the like—are "mediations" of a sort. But here we look specifically at the media which carry sounds to listeners or which facilitate performance and understanding, namely, recordings, scores, and academic discourse.

Nicole Beaudry takes us to northern Canada where she conducted field work in Dene communities in the early 1990s. She explores the complex and occasionally contradictory implications of oral and written as well as indigenous and non-indigenous representations concerning the history of the Dene drum dance. Her work offers a significant model for examining cultural change by engaging a rich matrix of perspectives.

Christopher Scales explores the burgeoning field of Aboriginal popular music in Canada, focusing on two pioneering musicians/groups, Lawrence Martin and Kashtin. The negotiation of issues of identity unfolds in his layered presentation of the production and reception of their recordings.

Annemarie Gallagher's study of the Toronto-Cuban musicscape portrays representations and mediations of the construct "Cuban music" in Toronto. She reports multiple and heterogeneous articulations of "Cubanness" within this locality, problematizing concepts of the local and ways in which music may articulate locality.

Jay Rahn looks at descriptive systems for explaining distinctively Chinese harmonic practice of recent decades. He argues that neither traditional Chinese music theory nor Euro-American tonal theory, on their own, adequately account for recent Chinese harmony, in theory and practice. Instead, recent atonal/non-tonal music theory shows considerable strength in this regard.

The Canadian studies in this volume merit attention as a group, not only because they constitute an important array of historical and sociocultural issues, but because they view Canada as a space of struggle. This perspective, not always evident in Canadian studies, emphasizes deliberations over the boundaries and connotations of genres, intra-cultural negotiations of identity,

and inter-cultural as well as diasporic recontextualization and reinvention. The sociocultural complexity of Canada makes this country an especially fruitful site for understanding the role that both the performance and commodified circulation of music play in defining individual and community relationships, the power vested in collectivity, and the effects of “narratives” in the organization of our cultural spaces.

All of the papers engage a concept of music culture which is not rigid and static but fluidly enacted by knowledgeable participants. Whether the emphasis is historical situatedness, ritual efficacy, or political negotiation, the sense of motion in these studies enlivens the data. Whether old habits and shared histories play a major role in shaping/constraining how musicians relate to their social worlds, or whether new cultural developments open spaces for renaming and re-evaluating musics, the capacity of music to make social spheres meaningful is evident.