

## Canadian University Music Review Revue de musique des universités canadiennes

Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, eds. *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. xi, 360 pp. ISBN 0-520-22083-8 (hardcover), ISBN 0-520-22084-6 (paperback)  
Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, eds. *Music and Gender*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000. ix, 376 pp. ISBN 0-252-02544-X (hardcover), ISBN 0-252-06865-3 (paperback)

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Over the last decade of the 20th century, music scholarship inched its way towards the kind of engagement with critical theory long embraced by the other arts.<sup>1</sup> With the two books under review here, *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* and *Music and Gender*, music scholarship has achieved a sophisticated marriage of music and critical theory. Gone is the sometimes tiresome confessional tone of early “new musicology,” largely absent is the glossing of musical materials too often found in sociological books on popular music. The hallmark of both volumes is their conscientious effort to map out explicit methodological and theoretical territory. Both books are rigorous, adventurous, and carefully considered collections of essays that can serve as important models for the training of young scholars.

My motivation for writing this review comes from my use of essays from these books in two different courses on music and identity in recent years. Interestingly, the first course was a cultural studies seminar, while the second was taught to upper-year music students.<sup>2</sup> I was much struck by the fact that the material could be useful in such different contexts. My cultural studies students had uneven competence in music theory and history, while my music students were largely unfamiliar with critical theory. Both groups engaged in ongoing, lively debate generated by the ideas raised in these books. This review will not attempt a comprehensive description of each essay contained in both volumes. Rather, I will address particular pieces for their relevance as pedagogical material, giving greater attention to *Western Music and Its Others*, as a full review of *Music and Gender* will appear in a forthcoming issue of

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the best-known examples include: Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s two volumes, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* and *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991 and 1996 respectively). Representative authors from the already interdisciplinary field of popular music studies include: Andy Bennett, Simon Frith, Dick Hebdige, Tony Mitchell, Joy Press, Tricia Rose, and Simon Reynolds.

<sup>2</sup> *Music and Identity*, 2001/02, Cultural Studies Program, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario; *Global and Local Identity in Music*, 2002, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario.

*CUMR*.<sup>3</sup> I want to argue that if a critical and interdisciplinary approach to musical scholarship is to be useful in the academy, we must integrate it into the training of undergraduates, rather than waiting to deprogram our graduate students.

### MAPPING A CRITICAL THEORY OF MUSIC

Of particular value in both books are the detailed introductory essays, which go beyond describing their distinct projects by advancing exciting theoretical possibilities for musical scholarship. In *Western Music and Its Others*, Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh map a complex terrain marked by working across musical sub-disciplines (musicology, ethnomusicology, popular music studies and film music studies), in order to think through a range of cultural issues. These are expressed as a number of relationships (between Orientalism/Postcolonialism, Modernism/Postmodernism, and Fusion/Hybridity) through which issues of identity, representation, and appropriation may be examined. The authors skillfully negotiate this potentially unwieldy combination of attitudes and lenses, identifying a number of “core conceptual problems” present in any critical approach to the study of music. At the centre is the need for a multi-layered theory that is both processual and homological, understanding that music “can both construct new identities and reflect existing ones” (p. 31). I found this weighty (fifty-eight page) essay most useful near the end of my courses on music and identity. Once familiar with the specific essays in the book, students were better able to track its dense argument and range of theoretical terms.

In their introduction to *Music and Gender*, Beverley Diamond and Pirkko Moisala reveal a more closely defined project: that of articulating a feminist ethnomusicology, expressed within a postcolonial frame that recognizes the “fluid and relational” nature of culture (p. 1). The authors acknowledge the foundational work on gender and music of such scholars as Ellen Koskoff and Marcia Herndon (both of whom made contributions to the volume). Going beyond an anthology of case studies on women in music, however, *Music and Gender* models a feminist analytical discourse marked by plurality of voice and self-reflexivity. Diamond and Moisala acknowledge this in their introduction, which is in the form of a multi-voiced conversation with the volume’s contributors, in turn providing insights into the process of studying and writing ethnomusicology. In using both of these books pedagogically, I have found it important to include short, clear introductions to the theoretical discourses adopted by the authors. For example, the essays in *Music and Gender* require a working knowledge of Judith Butler’s analysis of gender as a constructed, rather than a biological phenomenon. Likewise, Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism requires some knowledge of both semiotics and Lacanian psycho-

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<sup>3</sup>For an excellent review of *Western Music and Its Others*, see Beverley Diamond’s comprehensive piece in *Topia: a Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 6 (Fall 2001): 105–10.

analysis. It is possible to present capsule versions of such concepts, enriched with short source readings.<sup>4</sup>

Students were, however, surprisingly adept at understanding many of the key concepts in *Western Music and Its Others*, particularly representation and hybridity. For many students, music is self-evidently representational (an idea reinforced by music video). They make sense of it, not primarily through its materials, but through what it seems to suggest (what Born calls music's "hyperconnotative" power). Hybridity is a normative state for young students who have grown up in a popular culture characterized by the quick edit and the digital sample.

### ANALYSING MUSIC AND IDENTITY

In this section I will point to a selection of essays that I found particularly useful in teaching, which necessarily means that I will be omitting many excellent essays. For instance, *Western Music and Its Others* includes distinguished contributions by Richard Middleton, Jann Pasler, Julie Brown, and Philip Bohlman. *Music and Gender* features an impressive international array of women scholars including: Naila Ceribasic, Helmi Järviuoma, Cynthia Tse Kimberlin, Karen Pegley, and Boden Sandstrom. My choice of essays for teaching was influenced by thematic content, theoretical frame, and accessibility to students. For the sake of clarity I will discuss essays from each book in turn, beginning with *Western Music and Its Others*.

One of the most engaging essays for students is David Hesmondhalgh's fascinating study of Nation Records in London, England. "International Times: Fusions, Exoticism, and Antiracism in Electronic Dance Music" resonates immediately with students because of the currency of its subject matter. Its pedagogical value lies in its multi-layered analysis that refuses a simple narrative of cultural appropriation. Hesmondhalgh allows the voices of record executives, artists, and music critics to outline competing discourses of race, hybridity, and intellectual property, leading to fruitful discussions of the politics of sampling. In a somewhat similar vein, Steven Feld traces a single sample from an ethnomusicological field recording of Ba-Benzélé forest people's music through twenty-five years of popular music recordings. Here too, Feld resists a simple moralistic analysis of cultural borrowing, while clearly stating an ethics of field research.

Several essays focus on twentieth-century art music. John Corbett applies the problem of exoticism to composers ranging from Henry Cowell to John Cage to Steve Reich in his essay "Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other

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<sup>4</sup> Useful guides include John Storey, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1993); Anthony Easthope and Kate McGowan, eds., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). A good starting point is Kathryn Woodward's readable essay "Concepts of Identity and Difference" in *Identity and Difference*, ed. Kathryn Woodward (London: Sage Publications, 1997). A comprehensive set of source readings on identity ranging from discourse, to psychoanalysis, to sociology and history is Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman, eds., *Identity: A Reader* (London: Sage Publications, 2000).

Others.” Corbett distinguishes between the “conceptual orientalism” of Cage (*Ryoanji*) and the “contemporary chinoiserie” of Cowell (*Persian Set*). Despite his interesting consideration of Asian composers working with Western hybridity (including Toru Takemitsu, Toshiro Mayuzumi, Nguyen-Thien Dao, Chou Wen-Chung and Tan Dun), Corbett’s essay lacks the finesse of Hesmondhalgh’s and Feld’s, defaulting to a kind of moral categorization readily recognized and contested by students. Peter Franklin’s social history of expatriot European composers illuminates the complex aesthetics and politics of a particular place and time in “Modernism, Deception and Musical Others: Los Angeles circa 1940.” The engagingly documented and contrasting Hollywood experiences of Stravinsky and Rachmaninoff, and of Schoenberg and Korngold provide an excellent context for an introduction to the modernist aesthetics of Theodor Adorno.

*Western Music and Its Others* offers a number of different perspectives on the politics of music (and the politics of writing about music). Simon Frith (cultural theorist and erstwhile rock critic) questions the discourse of world music both in popular music terms and as ethnomusicology in “The Discourse of World Music.” One of the best essays in the book is Martin Stokes’s “East, West, and Arabesk.” Stokes presents multiple points of view on the political effects of a subaltern Turkish popular music in an essay that brilliantly combines detailed historical, ethnographic, musicological and critical theoretical work.

Beyond its pedagogical value, *Western Music and Its Others* stands as a promising model for a new ecumenism in the music academy. Musicology, ethnomusicology, film music and popular music studies all offer valuable insights into the material and cultural aspects of music, yet are too often involved in academic turf wars. Rather than seeking for a unified “theory of everything,” our work is best served through a wide range of theoretical and methodological tools which may be applied as appropriate. *Western Music and Its Others* acknowledges the value of sharing across disciplines, while retaining the specific strengths of each.

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*Music and Gender* offers a different kind of cross-disciplinary project, one that is explicitly located in ethnomusicology and gender studies; however, through its wide range of site-specific case studies, it too offers a multi-layered theoretical analysis. The book is organized according to four themes: 1. Music Performance and Performativity, 2. Telling Lives, 3. Gendered Musical Sites in the Redefinition of Nations, and 4. Technologies in Gendered Motion. With fourteen case studies and an epilogue, the book is able to provide a wide range of perspectives. Here I will point to just three.

Michelle Kisliuk’s examination of gender politics among BaAka forest people offers the most thoughtful consideration of “performative ethnography” since Barbara Browning’s ground-breaking *Samba* (1995). Kisliuk questions the allegorical analysis (first initiated by Turnbull) that provides a causal link between collective music making and egalitarian social structures in BaAka

culture. Through an exploration of her own experience learning BaAka music and dance, Kisliuk maps the intricate relationships among BaAka individuals, in gender politics, from the BaAka to their Bagandou neighbours, and from her own practice to academia.

Beverly Diamond's essay "The Interpretation of Gender Issues in Musical Life Stories of Prince Edward Islanders" shifts the analysis of narrative away from content to discourse. Her analysis of oral narratives by Prince Edward Island fiddlers carefully examines, not deeds and accomplishments, but rather musical preferences, associations, and relationships in order to show ways in which music and gender are "both sites for negotiating an individual place within communities that tend to reinforce certain values and behaviors as normative" (p. 100). Diamond's essay is a valuable exploration of narrative and gender, but just as importantly, it enacts an ethics of scholarship in which the intervention of the scholar on her material is made fully transparent.

Andra McCartney's essay "Cyborg Experiences: Contradictions and Tensions of Technology, Nature, and the Body in Hildegard Westerkamp's *Breathing Room*" is a good model of the possibilities for marrying a musical analysis of a particular piece with critical theory. Here, she invokes Donna Haraway's ironic image of the cyborg as "a mythical being, part organic and part cybernetic" (p. 318) to suggest a feminist stance both for composing electroacoustic music, and for listening to it. McCartney is thus able to point to tensions between the use of technology and the privileging of the organic in Westerkamp's music.

In championing these two anthologies for a pedagogy of critical music scholarship, I do not mean to suggest that students found the work easy or always enjoyed every essay. An interdisciplinary approach to music makes many demands on both instructors and students, not only to understand a variety of musical genres and style periods, but to penetrate the multifarious and, to many, the seemingly treacherous waters of critical theory. I can say with confidence that all the essays discussed here were fruitful in generating debate, and in introducing useful methodological and theoretical approaches. Music scholarship cannot afford to maintain a stubborn disciplinary conservatism in an increasingly interdisciplinary academic world, a fact that is recognized by the increasing number of innovative music programs in Canadian universities. *Western Music and Its Others* and *Music and Gender* are proof that "treacherous" waters are wonderfully exciting to navigate for both scholars and students.

Ellen Waterman