1. Ethnomusicology: Definitions, Directions, and Problems

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Ethnomusicology has been defined in many ways, none of them completely satisfactory. It has often simply been called the scholarly study of non-Western music, probably a poor definition because there are certainly no differences between Western and non-Western music greater than the differences among the non-Western musics themselves. It has been defined as the study of music that exists in oral tradition, but we also know that oral tradition is an important component of the many musical cultures that use notation. The transmission of Western concert music, for instance, despite its formidable notation system, includes many aural components, among them timbre and vibrato. And again, many cultures primarily dependent on oral tradition nevertheless use music notational and other mnemonic devices. For example, in Indian classical music drummers employ syllables to indicate types of strokes and sounds and as an aid in the memorization of rhythmic patterns. Indian singers also use a syllabic system analogous to the solfège of Western music. Iranian folk singers use written texts that give only the words of songs. These inevitably play a role in the realization of the music.

Ethnomusicology is sometimes defined as the study of a music foreign to one's own, but we also find scholars who call themselves ethnomusicologists and who study the music of their own native culture, usually the music of a group outside the framework of Western, educationally élite social strata. We also find other definitions, among them that ethnomusicology is the study of contemporary musical systems, an idea perhaps acceptable in practical terms to all scholars working in the field except for those (and there are quite a few) who are interested in traditional historical research in the musics of Asia and, to a lesser extent, other areas of the world. Many anthropologists favor a definition of ethnomusicology as the study of music *in* and *as* culture; the study of how people use, perform, compose, and think about music; and of their general attitudes toward it. The emphasis of this definition is at the other end of the continuum from that of the musicologically oriented researchers whose primary concern is in the structure of the music itself. The best results and insights can be obtained by combining and fusing these two approaches, but this ideal balance has not often been achieved.

A final definition is that ethnomusicology is the comparative study of musical systems and cultures. This definition may be controversial in that some scholars think that we do not know enough about the musical cultures of the world to carry out meaningful comparisons. Others are of the opinion that musics are intrinsically not comparable, that they cannot be translated into a set of common denominators; however supporters of this definition would be inclined to say that only from comparison can insight be gained, that one can learn something new only by comparing it with what one already knows.

It is evident, then, that there is no completely acceptable definition of ethnomusicology. It is equally uncertain whether ethnomusicology is a separate discipline, requiring its own rationale, methodology, apparatus, courses, curricula, and learned societies, or whether it is indeed simply a field of interest and an activity that draws its adherents from a number of recognized disciplines—musicology, anthropology, folklore, linguistics, psychology, and others. Or yet whether it is simply a subdivision of musicology, or of

anthropology. Most individuals who consider themselves ethnomusicologists began as musicians, some as students of musicology in the more traditional sense, and some as anthropologists. It is not my purpose here to solve this problem of the identity of ethnomusicology; it may never be solved, but the reader should be aware of just where this field stands in academe in the United States and elsewhere.

Even the term *ethnomusicology* has been in existence for only about twenty-five years, although activity in the field began much earlier. It had immediate predecessors—comparative musicology, musical ethnology, foreign terms such as *Musikethnologie* or *ethnographie musicale*. In a sense the field is new, for it has changed constantly and is now moving rapidly in many directions; but in another sense it is old, its roots go far back to the rather simple, not always reliable, yet valuable descriptions of Asian, African, and Latin American native musics by missionaries, travelers, and civil and military officials who were often highly educated and perceptive. The individuals who began making musicology into a formal discipline in the last part of the nineteenth century, mainly Germans and Austrians, but also some Englishmen and Americans, included in their purview the kinds of things that ethnomusicologists do today. These scholars were aware of the existence of many musics throughout the world and were also becoming acquainted with theories of biological and cultural evolution. They began to look for universals in world music and also to try to comprehend the vast variety of musical phenomena found in the cultures developed by mankind.

The reason for discussing the identity and hinting at the history of ethnomusicology, however briefly, is that we have in this volume a number of essays treating various and enormously different musics of the world, and treating them from many points of view. In some instances these differences are derived from the differences among the cultures themselves. For example, Native Americans do not have written music theory, thus this aspect of their music cannot be discussed; but this is not true of the classical music of India. Moreover, the differences among the essays derive also from the differences in the kinds of information available for the various cultures of the world. For some, much musical material has been recorded, but information about its cultural context is spotty and has been gathered unsystematically; for others the opposite is true. But most important, the differences of approach that the reader will find here derive from the fact that among the authors are represented a number of views of what the field of ethnomusicology really comprises. Here are authors who worked initially as musicians, some whose background is in musicology, some who actually began their studies in non-Western music (among them Americans and Europeans as well as natives of non-Western nations), and there is of course the anthropologist. Therefore, the volume at hand presents not only a large variety of musical cultures but also provides the reader with a panorama of approaches to the field of ethnomusicology.

The fact that ethnomusicology is defined in a number of different ways and is populated by individuals coming from a number of disciplines does not mean that we do not have a rather substantial core of agreement. There are indeed a number of things to which ethnomusicologists, on the whole, would probably subscribe. I should like to mention a few and to discuss them very briefly.

1. *Ethnomusicologists seem to have been torn between two ideals: the basic unity of mankind as exhibited in music and musical behavior, and the infinite variety of musical phenomena found in the world.* On the one hand, we have been seeking universals. This was certainly true of the early scholars in our field who tried to characterize broad areas of musical culture such as "primitive music," folk music, and tribal music; who tried to say very general things about the way in which scales everywhere are built, the general direction of melodic movement, and the way in which music throughout the world may have developed, from simple to complex, from vocal to instrumental, from exclusively religious to diverse in use and function, from simple universal structures to a considerable variety of phenomena, yet united by such characteristics

as the usual existence of meter, and the overriding importance of melodic intervals close to the major second. Today, after a period in which the particular character of a music was stressed above all else, the search for universals is again important. Ethnomusicologists are aware that musical phenomena in different cultures may seem identical to an outsider, but can be interpreted quite contrastively by the members of these cultures. For instance, surface similarities between African and East Indian rhythms may obscure the totally different ways in which these structures are perceived in their cultural contexts—but they are beginning to feel that there is a kind of deep structure that identifies the phenomenon of music.

At the same time, ethnomusicologists are still interested in presenting the vast diversity of musical sounds and modes of musical behavior. The ethnomusicologist is typically a person who, when confronted with a general statement about music, will say: "But in this or that culture or on this or that island, we do not find the phenomenon, things are different." He has acted as the debunker of generalizations based essentially on experience with Western art music. So in the heart of the ethnomusicologist there are two strings: one that attests to the universal character of music, to the fact that music is indeed something that all cultures have or appear to have, whether they themselves have a definition of the concept or not, and one responsive to the enormous variety of existing cultures.

2. *Ethnomusicologists agree that in order to carry out research it is necessary to work in the field.* Theoretical information, logically derived, is not the core of what we provide. Ethnomusicologists engage in field research in order to gather information. This fieldwork is also experientially transferable. Fieldwork in a culture outside a researcher's own will in a certain sense give him some understanding of other cultures that he has not visited, or at least give him an idea of the problems that he may encounter in carrying out research in other regions. Also the tendency of ethnomusicologists has been to work intensively rather than extensively in the field. This means that one concentrates on working with a small number of informants or teachers, does not usually survey large populations but, instead, emphasizes study in depth of small numbers of people.

The concept of "the field" has of course changed greatly over the past few decades. At one time, ethnomusicologists did research only in what were considered highly exotic venues, but today many of them work in neighborhoods in their own cities, with members of racial, national, often non-English speaking minorities and, indeed, with members of their own culture, at home. Certain special techniques for field research have been developed, from sophisticated recording and filming devices to contemplation of various approaches to gathering information from people who have not been used to thinking or talking about music in the way in which the researcher phrases his questions, or perhaps have hardly thought or talked about music at all.

Ethnomusicologists are very much concerned not only with going into the field but also with the kind of work that must be done, with methods and techniques.

Field techniques vary greatly. They are intensely personal, they involve the specific relationship between an investigator, with his own cultural and personal background, and his informant or teacher. Field research has changed a great deal in the last half century. It began essentially as a gathering of raw material, with concentration on the music—songs, instruments, and instrumental pieces—with secondary attention to the cultural context. For example, a researcher would ask an informant to sing a number of songs. He would record them and ask, for each song, information about its origin, function, means of transmission, and other pertinent matters. From this sort of technique, ethnomusicologists moved on to more sophisticated approaches—the practical study of an instrument, development of questionnaires, inquiries about attitudes toward music, investigation of taxonomies used to classify musical phenomena in the culture, and so on. These inevitably necessitated spending much longer periods in the field. Today most ethnomusicologists devote at least a year to carrying out any kind of major field project, and many of them return

again and again to the area in which they work, passing perhaps half a dozen or more years in nations such as Japan, India, Iran, or Ghana.

Within this discussion of field techniques one should mention two recent developments. One is the establishment of the fieldworker as primarily a student within the cultural context of his "field." In earlier times, he regarded himself mainly as a collector, a figure of authority who had to persuade a group of informants to work with him, to deliver, so to speak, the goods. Later it became evident that it is more productive, satisfying, and perhaps ethically more defensible to approach another culture as a student, to be taken in hand by a master who will teach him as he teaches students in his own culture. This approach is of course extremely valuable in many ways. One learns much about a musical system from the learning process itself and finds out how members of the culture internalize their own music. One gains some of the same kinds of insights that members of the culture acquire in the course of their lives. At the same time, it is possible that one may not, using this kind of technique, learn some of the kinds of things that an outsider, observing the culture from his special vantage point, may gain. For example, some of the intricacies of the *radif*, the repertory of Persian music memorized by students of the classical tradition as a basis for improvisation, are not evident to Iranian musicians; or, at least, they are not conscious of them, until an outsider points them out.

There has also been increasing concern with the kinds of obligation that a fieldworker incurs toward the people from whom he has been learning. This concern involves such things as the sharing of earnings from commercial recordings, but it goes much farther, including perhaps such considerations as the recording of music that members of the culture investigated consider should not be recorded at all, often for religious reasons, and the treatment of informants as dignified individuals. In any event, the most important hallmark of ethnomusicological research is the concept of fieldwork with its many ramifications. And, of course, ethnomusicological studies must be evaluated to some extent in relation to the quality of the fieldwork on which they are based.

3. *Ethnomusicologists agree, on the whole, that music can be written down and analyzed from visible format.* We might not take this so much for granted were not we ourselves, in Western culture, visually oriented, and had we not, as a result, suffered considerably in our ability to hear and retain music without the intervention of music writing. The notation provided by Western art music has often been found inadequate for ethnomusicological purposes. From the beginning of their history, ethnomusicologists have found various means of transcribing non-Western music into a notation of some sort, usually that of Western music to which have been added certain symbols that make it possible to record phenomena that either do not appear or are not important in conventional Western music. Three particularly interesting approaches to notation are discussed in Mantle Hood's book, *The Ethnomusicologist*. One of them, the "Seeger Solution," involves the development of complex machinery to notate music automatically by means of computer logic circuitry to produce a three-part photographic display consisting of pitch, loudness, and timbre. The best known apparatus developed for this purpose is the melograph at UCLA. There are others as well. Not too many publications have resulted from work done with this approach. This paucity makes me feel, first of all, that we are still on the threshold of learning how to use the apparatus, and second, that there is somehow here a lack of appeal to the scholar who prefers to work directly with the musical material, and who objects to relying on machinery to do what is essentially an initial processing of raw data.

Another approach described by Hood is the "Hipkins Solution." The approach (I am giving my own interpretation, not Hood's) is based essentially on the notation systems found in various non-Western cultures, on the assumption that one cannot notate everything about a music anyway, that there are too many significant and insignificant phenomena, and that if we are to look for the really essential, we may well look to

the culture's own statement as exhibited in its notation. This is a valuable approach.

The third approach is named by Hood the "Laban Solution," after Rudolph von Laban, inventor of the most widely used notation for dance. Hood proposes the use of a kind of notation for music that would indicate the sound as well as the stance, movements, and interrelationships of the musicians, in enormous detail. This seems highly desirable but may not be practical at this stage. The relationship of sound and behavior in notation is an ideal for which we should strive.

In the end, an examination of ethnomusicological publications shows that scholars in earlier times transcribed music simply for the sake of preserving it, thinking that their main task was indeed to transcribe and not necessarily to analyze. Today we have moved to a different sort of approach. Realizing the futility of notating everything about all musics of the world, we now tend to use transcription as a device for solving specific analytical problems, and the kind of method of transcription that we select is related to the particular problem confronting us, such as comparison of section lengths in an extended improvisation, types of ornaments, identification of a tone system.

Following transcription—in many cases preceding it—is analysis. As a scholar transcribes music, he must first have in mind the characteristics of the musical system, which means that he must analyze the music aurally to some extent before he can transcribe. Having transcribed a body of music into notation, however, he may then proceed to further analysis. A large number of procedures have been devised. Indeed, it is difficult to survey them, but I should like to point out that there are publications (e.g., B. Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology;* Marcia Herndon, "Analysis: the herding of sacred cows?" in *Ethnomusicology*, 18:219-62) that provide overviews. There are really two types of systems in use. One attempts to provide a framework for all musical phenomena of the world, or for all imaginable kinds of music, and to make it possible within this framework to describe and compare musics. The other comprises approaches that are culture-specific, derived in each case from the music under study and, if possible, based on the theoretical system developed by the culture that has produced the music.

There are many approaches that fall between these extremes, and one of the unfortunate characteristics of ethnomusicology is that there has been no standardization of analytical procedures. At one time there was widespread adherence to the approaches derived from the work of Erich M. von Hornbostel and Béla Bartók, but as time has gone by we have become more and more interested in providing for each scholarly problem a particular way of analyzing the music. In that sense, the history of analysis parallels the history of transcription. We devise analytical and notational methods to fit what we wish to find out about the music.

It is important to realize that in recent years elements from the discipline of linguistics and from French anthropological structuralism have been found useful by certain ethnomusicologists for musical analysis. Moreover, concepts developed in cognitive studies have had an impact, as have other approaches derived from the social sciences.

4. *Ethnomusicologists are always interested in music as a phenomenon produced by a culture.* Whether they come from the field of anthropology or not, to some extent they are all interested in the study of music in its cultural context. They may carry out the study of this relationship very systematically or in a rather haphazard fashion, but even those among us who regard ourselves primarily as musicians find that it is impossible to understand very much about a music without knowing something about its cultural and historical background. Of course, many musicologists also share this view. At the same time, we feel that the contrary is true, that one cannot really understand a culture without taking into account the almost inevitably great importance of its music.

The types of approach that ethnomusicologists have taken to study the relationship of music to its culture vary greatly. There have been attempts to encapsulate entire cultures;

there have also been efforts to establish frameworks for comparative study. There have been efforts to show correlations between musical types and culture types and to single out the cultural determinants of music, which would mean that certain types of culture inevitably produce particular kinds of musical style. Curt Sachs, an early scholar in the field of ethnomusicology, and Alan Lomax today have addressed themselves to some of these approaches. There have been attempts to show that certain aspects of human experience and behavior, types of early childhood training, kinds of relationships among social and economic classes and between sexes, and relative freedom of movement or restriction thereof are particularly important in determining the type of music that a culture produces. Some have noted that music in a culture can be studied either as a microcosm of the culture, the musical system replicating in detail the total cultural and social system that a people have adopted; or that music can also be considered a commentary on a culture, existing somehow outside the culture itself and reacting to what goes on in the society either by reflecting it or even by denouncing it through exhibiting opposite characteristics and tendencies; and finally that music can be regarded as one among the various other activities of man, carrying out in each culture a task, having, as it were, a special niche in each society. It must be pointed out that ethnomusicologists have made much more progress in the study of musical sound, in the analysis of transcribed music, than in the study of music as culture; but this is surely due simply to the relatively greater difficulty of the latter pursuit.

5. *Whether or not they really consider themselves historians, ethnomusicologists are always interested in the processes through which music changes, remains stable, grows, and disappears, and they have this interest for a culture as a whole, in the individual song or piece, and in the life of an individual or group.* Understanding music requires an understanding of some of these processes and, using the concept of history very broadly, it is fair to say that ethnomusicologists are interested in history. A number of approaches to historical study have been taken, of which we can mention only a few.

The first stirrings of interest in the history of world music, the growth of some present musics with all their complexity from some kind of earlier, simple stratum is one such interest. Comparison of cultures throughout the world, the search for universals, lead one almost automatically to a consideration of the possibility that those phenomena that are most widespread in the world are also likely to be among the oldest, and that the simplest may also exhibit an archaic layer. This is true of music with few tones and brief one- or two-phrase forms, and of certain simple instruments such as the musical bow, flutes without fingerholes, and rattles. In general, the extrapolation of historical strata from a repertory presently extant has been a characteristic of ethnomusicological research. There are a good many scholars who think that this approach is not fruitful, that the chances of our knowing whether we are right in such extrapolations are too small to make this kind of study worthwhile. Critics assert that this view places a kind of special value on complexity and denigrates relatively simple music. It should certainly not be assumed that what we consider qualitatively simple in a musical culture is necessarily, in all cases, old; nor that a culture with an archaic repertory is automatically archaic in other respects; nor, indeed, that this is a value judgment. Some cultures have what we might regard as extremely simple musical styles—very few tones in their scales, very short repetitive songs, very simple forms. This is true of some Australian aboriginal music (by no means all) and of some Native American songs.

Ethnomusicologists have also taken great interest in the history of individual compositions. On the assumption that oral tradition produces variants, that we do not, in most cases, have the originally composed form of a piece, ethnomusicologists study the many different ways in which one particular piece, or song, may be performed. Sometimes this involves literally hundreds of variants of one tune, as in the case of studies made by students of Hungarian and other Eastern European folk music, or of the 120

or so tunes found to be sung with the ballads of "Barbara Allen" or "Lord Randall" or "Lord Bateman." From a comparative study of these variants, one may be able to gain some insight into the history of the tune as it has unfolded into its many different versions, variants, and forms.

Another way in which ethnomusicologists pursue an interest in processes is of course the conventional study of history. The civilizations of Asia have for centuries had documents that give information on history in general, and on the history of music, and one can study these more or less as one studies theoretical and biographical documents in the history of European music. Many treatises, for example, exist in the literary, historical, or philosophical annals of Japan, China, Indonesia, India, and the Middle East. Moreover, as historians in recent times have begun to make increasing use of oral tradition, musicologists have begun to use it as a source for standard historical research. The histories of the musics of African and Native American cultures have been studied in part from the use of information current in oral tradition.

More characteristic of ethnomusicology, however, is the attempt to observe processes as they occur, to assess them, and to see whether from a particular set of evolving cultural conditions one may be able to predict certain types of musical changes. Ethnomusicologists have therefore been concerned with recent phenomena in world history—Westernization, modernization, urbanization, all types of culture contact subsumed under the general term *acculturation*. After all, one of the main characteristics of the twentieth century in music and in other areas of life is the coming together of many cultures, their interactions, their conflicts, and the ultimate resolution of these conflicts through conquests or accommodation. Musical conquests have certainly taken place; some cultures have simply abandoned their traditional music and taken up the Western counterpart. Accommodation has also taken place and is perhaps a more typical phenomenon of the twentieth century. The musics of the world have changed, influenced by Western products such as the mass media, amplification, notation, the value placed on large ensembles, Western harmony, the idea of concert performance, the concept of the professional musician. But traditional music retains its identity, modified by compatible (and sometimes not so compatible) elements imported from Western musical culture.

There was a time when ethnomusicologists thought that they could find pristine, unpolluted, uncontaminated musics around the world. They assumed that musics in other cultures had remained static until, under the impact of Westernization, they had begun to change rapidly and drastically. Today we have come to feel that all musics have probably undergone substantial change at all times. Sometimes the change was snail-paced; this may have been true of Gagaku, the music of the Japanese court orchestra, or of Indian classical music. Elsewhere the change may have been rapid, as in certain periods in the history of Indonesia and the Middle East. It depends on the amount of contact with other cultures, on the structure of the society itself, on the values placed on stability and on novelty. Therefore, while it is generally assumed that there is a polarity between the typical musicologist, who is interested in history, and the ethnomusicologist, who is not, it is indeed the ethnomusicologist who is especially interested in what has happened in world music at large, who takes a broad view of the concept of change, and who wishes to know what types of things happen under various conditions in which cultures find themselves in the twentieth century, and particularly in the ways in which various types of intercultural relationships affect music.

If, then, there is a methodology in the field of ethnomusicology, it must, it seems to me, revolve around these five characteristics of the field: the interest in universals balanced by appreciation of infinite variety; the emphasis on fieldwork; the possibility of notating and analyzing music visually and verbally; the insistence that music can be understood only in its cultural context; and the interest in processes. This configuration of approaches seems to me to

constitute the essence of ethnomusicology.

At the time of this writing, there are scholars who believe that ethnomusicology is in a state of crisis. There are panels and publications that discuss the future of this field, that ask whether it has legitimacy among the various academic disciplines, and that deal with its possible political, racial, and economic overtones. We who work in ethnomusicology are still constantly trying to define ourselves, and we feel that we have identity problems. But indeed, ethnomusicological research has shed a great deal of light on issues facing the musician, the music teacher, and the scholar. It is ethnomusicologists who have made it clear that it is impossible to gain a perspective of music at large without taking into consideration the enormous diversity of the musics of the world and of the cultural contexts in which they exist. It is the ethnomusicologists who have called the attention of composers to the multitude of phenomena around the world on which they might draw for inspiration. It is they who have, in the long run, made the various ethnic groups in the West, and also the various downtrodden peoples of the world, proud of their musical heritage in a modern cultural context and aware of the fact that their music is an important symbol of their ethnic or national identity. Among scholars, it is ethnomusicologists who have drawn attention to certain central issues of musicology, who have pointed out the enormous importance of the arts in human life to the anthropologist and psychologist. Ethnomusicology has rendered valuable services to the world, to the arena of artistic and intellectual concerns.

Nevertheless, we face problems, and one can well consider these in relationship to the five areas that have been mentioned as constituting the methodological and theoretical core of our field.

With all our interest in diversity and in universals, we still do not have data on all the world's musics and thus cannot make definitive statements about the range of diversity, or pinpoint the universals. We still have not established what constitutes *a* music, a concept analogous to a language, so that we can scientifically define the units that might serve as a basis for an understanding of this diversity.

We agree that fieldwork is essential, but we have difficulty in teaching anyone how to do it. There are not many courses on ethnomusicological fieldwork, and not very much has really been written on how it should be done or how it was carried out in particular instances. We don't know very well how to deal with this curious phenomenon of recent decades, the scholar using his own backyard as "the field."

Although we accept the usefulness of transcription and analysis, we find ourselves constantly working with two sides of the coin, trying to balance the outsider's observations against those of the person who has been brought up within the culture being studied and who can provide immediately the kind of information that may take an outsider years to obtain. We wonder whether the outsider's view is at all valid and we struggle to comprehend and codify the insider's understanding of his culture. As outsiders, we are sometimes discouraged with the idea that in a sense most of us will never understand some of the most fundamental things about the musics that we study.

We have not yet figured out just how best to study music as a part of culture. There are a few techniques, a few sample approaches, but we are barely beginning to scratch the surface. We do not know whether to treat music as a truly component part of culture or as something that somehow resides outside culture itself but comments on it and describes or reflects it, and we have difficulty in balancing the ways in which people with whom we are working tell us how music affects them with the observations that we can make of their behavior.

And finally, we are still frustrated by the fact that while we are enormously interested in processes, in the development of music as a whole or as the product of one culture, and as an individual song or piece, over a period of time, and we wish to know how music is created, taught, learned, changed, and perpetuated, we realize that we are a long way from knowing the answers and that we may never have sufficient data to find the answers. We fear that we will never

come to the kinds of definitive conclusions expected by students of the natural sciences.

Therefore, ethnomusicology is a field that has contributed much, but which must contribute a great deal more because its approaches are essential to an understanding of music as a product of mankind. But it is also a field struggling to establish itself, not so much among the scholars in other disciplines (they have, on the whole, accepted us with little reservation), but in our own minds, with concrete questions, goals, methods, and some certainty of being able to reach reliable conclusions. It is a field in a state of ferment. I believe that the reader of the essays in this book will gain, from their diversity, from the great variety of cultures, musics, and approaches, some sense of this ferment, a sense that will impart to him the excitement as well as the frustrations but also ultimately the love that the scholars who are writing here have developed, a love for the music they have heard and recorded and learned, for the activities that lead them laboriously to understand this music, and for the peoples who in the end have produced all that they have studied.