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‘The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music and the Application of Meta-Critical Scholarship on Ethnography: Reinscribing Critical Distance’
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Abstract: A branch of ethnomusicology no longer focuses on music, musical and cultural practices either outside of the Western world or in Western communities who continue to practice vernacular traditions with significant histories of their own. Instead, its practitioners apply ethnographic methods, generally developed in these former contexts, to the study of Western Art Music. A moderate-sized canonical tradition of this type of work has grown, beginning with Robert Faulkner’s 1973 study of perceived hierarchies between orchestral players and conductors, and Catherine M. Cameron’s 1982 dissertation on ‘experimentalism’ in American music, then key works of Christopher Small, Henry Kingsbury, Ruth Finnegan, Bruno Nettl, Georgina Born, Kay Kaufman Shelemay and others. Subsequent writers invariably pay homage to this body of work, almost as if it were a catechism, whilst many of the same waste few opportunities to assert the superiority of their approaches to most other branches of musicology, usually characterised as homogeneous and utterly oblivious to any issues of social or cultural context.

In the wider fields of ethnography and anthropology, however, a lively and robust self-critical discourse has proceeded over four decades, beginning with critiques in the 1980s of what was labelled ‘ethnographic realism’. Major methodological work on ethnography, from diverse and sometimes irreconcilable perspectives, can be found in the work of George E. Marcus, James Clifford, Martyn Hammersley, John van Maanen, Charles Kurzman, Harry F. Wolcott, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Tim Ingold, and Mitchell Duneier, some of whom have been prepared to look more critically at classic anthropological work of the likes of Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead, as well as that of more recent figures. Furthermore, in 2018, law professor Steve Lubet published his important *Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters*, after being dismayed by the generally uncritical reception of Alice Goffman’s study of low-income African-American communities, *On the Run*, which Lubet felt violated fundamental scholarly and ethical principles of research.

Other than through a nod in the direction of the 1980s ‘postmodern turn’ informing a few of the writers from this time, very little of this work appears even to have registered in writings on the ethnography/ethnomusicology of Western Art Music. In this paper, I will give an overview of this meta-critical field and the key issues it raises, and also briefly of the body of ethnographic literature on Western Art Music, in which I identify two key phases: the first characterised in many cases by outright hostility on the part of the ethnographer to the field studied (as with Kingsbury, Nettl, Christopher Small and Born); the second overwhelmingly by supposedly disinterested ‘description’ (in reality a long way from Clifford Geertz’s idea of ‘thick description’), and generally taking the word of subjects at face value (as anticipated in the work of Finnegan, and developed in that of Shelemay, Stephen Cottrell, Amanda Bayley and Michael Clarke and Pirko Moisala). I focus on several key points: central amongst them Duneier’s conception of an ‘ethnographic trial’, and some of the conclusions of

Lubet. I also consider how an attitude entailing some degree of deferential humility towards the subjects studied may make some sense in a situation in which there is a clear power differential between the ethnographer and their subjects, when the same attitudes and methods – not least such as entail large quantities of quotations presented without any critical analysis – are transplanted to a non-colonial situation, as with much of the work in question, the result can simply become hagiography. I also make brief mention of the problems of a field so beset by territorialism that it must disregard almost all methods for analysing aural data, leading to what I have elsewhere called ‘musicology without ears’, and also a concomitant antipathy towards historical methods, thus running the real risk of reification, in line with earlier anthropology dealing with purportedly ‘timeless’ communities. I maintain and defend the value of ethnographic approaches, but argue that they constitute a supplementary method to an extensive and diverse field of existing musicology, and in no way supplant it. Above all, I maintain the importance of musicologists’ maintaining a proper critical perspective upon their field of study, together with a critical distance from their subjects, an especial challenge when these are contemporary.

Paper

The Dutch scholar Jaap Kunst defined the term ethnomusicology in multiple revised editions of a text, beginning in 1950:

To the question: what is the study-object of comparative musicology, the answer must be: mainly the music and the musical instruments of all non-European peoples, including both the so-called primitive peoples and the civilized Eastern nations. Although this science naturally makes repeated excursions into the field of European music, the latter – especially in its modern art forms – is, in itself, only an indirect object of its study.

The name of our science is, in fact, not quite characteristic; it does not ‘compare’ any more than any other science. A better name, therefore, is that appearing on the title page of this book: *ethno-musicology*.

Jaap Kunst, *Musicologica: a Study of the Nature of Ethno-musicology, its Problems, Methods, and Representative Personalities* (Amsterdam: Indisch Instituut, 1950).

In 1959, by which time Kunst had removed the hyphen from the term, he revised this to say:

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.

The original term ‘comparative musicology’ (vergleichende Musikwissenschaft) fell into disuse, because it promised more - for instance, the

study of mutual influences in Western art-music - than it intended to comprise, and, moreover, our science does not 'compare' any more than any other science.

Jaap Kunst, *Ethnomusicology: A study of its nature, its problems, methods and representative personalities*, third edition (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959).

Even though the term was new (though evidence has been provided that the term, Kunst regarded ethnomusicology as a field of study which could be dated back at least seventy years from when he was writing, beginning with the work of Alexander John Ellis, looking at pitch and scales in different global contexts, then continuing through that of Alfred James Hipkins, Otto Abraham, Erich von Hornbostel, Curt Sachs and many others.

Time does not permit a comprehensive survey of the development of the term and the field since Kunst's publications, which has been done many times elsewhere. Suffice to say that ever since the writings of Alan P. Merriam in the 1960s and especially his 1964 book *The Anthropology of Music*, a branch of ethnomusicology has been concerned strongly with the study of music in culture, as a cultural practice and in terms of its relation to the wider culture and society it inhabits. It was perhaps inevitable, and far from undesirable, that this type of ethnomusicology would venture into Western art music, in line with the subdiscipline known as 'Anthropology at Home' (see Anthony Jackson (ed.), *Anthropology at Home* (London: Tavistock, 1987)) thus exceeding Kunst's definition.

This body of work is the object of my paper today, and in a moment I will give an overview of the most prominent work in this field. But first I want to look at a central method employed in such work, specifically *ethnography*. This is not an easy term to define precisely, and various authoritative sources provide different definitions, some of which you will see here. Common dictionary and encyclopedia entries define it as 'writing about the people':

'Literally "writing about the people", this denotes research which concentrates on directly observing and describing in detail the activities of some people.'

'Ethnography', in *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*, edited Steve Bruce and Steven Yearly (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 95.

'Literally, ethnography means writing about people, or writing an account of the way of life of a particular people.'

Martyn Hammersley, 'ethnography', in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited George Ritzer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), p. 1479.

Tim Ingold does however point to the limitations of these types of definitions:

'Quite literally, it [ethnography] means *writing about the people*. Though we anthropologists would likely not turn to the dictionary definition, others well might, and this is what they would find: "a scientific description of races and peoples with their customs, habits and mutual differences." [taken from *Shorter English Dictionary, sixth edition*] To us, of course, this sounds hopelessly

anachronistic. We would move at once to remove all reference to race. We would insist that there is far more to description than the mere cataloging of habits and customs. In thickening our descriptions, and allowing a real historical agency to the people who figure in them, we might want to qualify the sense in which these accounts could be considered to be scientific. Ethnographic description, we might well say, is more an art than a science, but no less accurate or truthful for that.’
Tim Ingold, ‘That’s enough about ethnography!’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnography Theory* vol. 4, no. 1 (2014) p. 385.

Many focus on the importance of participant observation of activities of particular groups of people:

‘Ethnographic research (also referred to as *field research* or *participant observation*) is a qualitative social science method that involves the observation of the interactions of everyday life... The theoretical intent of ethnography is inductive, generating concepts and theories from the data.’

Carol A. B. Warren, ‘Ethnography’, in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, second edition, edited Edgar F. Borgatt and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2000), p. 852.

‘Involving the first-hand exploration and immersive participation in a natural research setting to develop an empathic understanding (Verstehen) of the lives of persons in that setting,’

Mick Bloor and Fiona Wood, ‘ethnography’, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, edited Bryan S. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 176.

‘ethnography is the systematic description of a single contemporary culture, often through ethnographic fieldwork.’

Peter Wyatt Wood, ‘Ethnography and Ethnology’, in *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, edited Thomas Barfield (Malden: Blackwell, 1997), p. 157.

However, not all are enamoured of this equation of ethnography with participant observation:

‘Ethnography is a methodology – a theory, or set of ideas – about research that rests on a number of fundamental criteria. Ethnography is iterative-inductive research; that is to say it evolves in design through the study (see **analysis, coding, fieldnotes, grounded theory, and induction**). Ethnography draws on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, and **asking questions** (see **interviews, participant observation, and visual ethnography**). It results in richly written accounts that respect the irreducibility of human experience (see **writing**), acknowledges the role of theory (see **generalisation**), as well as the researcher’s own role (see **reflexivity**), and views humans as part object/part subject...’

Karen O’Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 2009), p. 3.

If we were to limit our conceptualization of ethnography to its descriptive/analytical component, it would allow us to think more clearly about the ways that we gather the data making up such a piece of work. Defining ethnography, therefore, as a written or filmic depiction of a people reminds us that participant observation is but one way among a number of approaches that enable the social researcher to produce an ethnography. Participant observation may well be the most effective way to arrive at the final destination in some, and perhaps even most, cases, but it is not essential to the effective production of a descriptive-analytical account of a social grouping.

Jenny Hockey and Martin Forsey, 'Ethnography is Not Participant Observation: Reflections on the Interview as Participatory Qualitative Research', in *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*, edited Jenny Skinner (New York: Berg, 2012), p. 73.

In terms of data collection, ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. Generally speaking ethnographers draw on a *range* of sources of data, though they may sometimes rely primarily on one.

Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, third edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

Others add the category of producing a written description to the definition of ethnography itself, so it is not just undertaking the participant observation, but also the writing about it afterwards:

'A term usually applied to the acts both of observing directly the behaviour of a social group and producing a written description thereof. Sometimes also referred to as fieldwork...'

John Scott, 'ethnography', in *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, fourth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 223.

'An ethnography is a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do.'

Alan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language*, second edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 111.

As Clifford Geertz (1988) notes, "thick description" is the foundation of ethnography. But equally important is analysis: the generation of concepts, patterns, or typologies from thick description, and their linkage to concepts, theories, and literatures already established in the discipline.

Carol A. B. Warren, 'Ethnography', in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, second edition, edited Edgar F. Borgatt and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2000), p. 852.

Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which

involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting. It is premised on the view that the central aim of the social sciences is to understand people's actions and their experiences of the world, and the ways in which their motivated actions arise from and reflect back on these experiences. Once this is the central aim, knowledge of the social world is acquired from intimate familiarity with it, and ethnography is central as a method because it involves this intimate familiarity with day-to-day practice and the meanings of social action. To access social meanings, observe behaviour and work closely with informants and perhaps participate in the field with them, several methods of data collection tend to be used in ethnography, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, personal documents and discourse analyses of natural language. As such, ethnography has a distinguished career in the social sciences. There have been 'travellers tales' for centuries, going back even to antiquity, which count as a form of ethnographic research in that they purported to represent some aspect of social reality (in this case, a country, group or culture) on the basis of close acquaintance with and observation of it, although often they reflected the cultural and political prejudices of their own society.

John Brewer, *Ethnography* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), p. 11.

And now I want to give, as briefly as I can, an overview of some significant methodological debates which have existed in the wider ethnographic field. Only relatively few of these have impacted on the musicological work I will be considering, but I have been interested to find that many of the criticisms I had earlier considered are echoed here.

In the 1980s, one can speak of a 'postmodern turn' in ethnography through a critique of what was called 'ethnographic realism' – an approach entailing a limited presence for the ethnographer, the downplaying of individuals rather than groups, focus on everyday experience, extrapolation of data and so on. Critics from this angle often focused their attention on the nature of ethnographic *writing*, and some advocated the use of more experimental literary models. At the same time, writers questioned the very possibility of objective distance and dispassionate observation on the part of the ethnographer and various other common assumptions which they felt to have accompanied much ethnographic work up to that point.

George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, 'Ethnographies as Texts'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982), pp. 25–69

George E. Marcus, 'Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System'. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 165-93.

Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

‘With expanded communication and intercultural influence, people interpret others, and themselves, in a bewildering diversity of idioms – a global condition of what Mikhail Bakhtin (1953) called “heteroglossia”. This ambiguous multivocal world makes it increasingly hard to conceive of human diversity as inscribed in bounded, independent cultures.’ (pp. 22-23).

‘The ethnographer always ultimately departs, taking away texts for later interpretation (and among those “texts” taken away we can include memories – events patterned, simplified, stripped of immediate context in order to be interpreted in later reconstruction and portrayal). The text, unlike discourse, can travel. If much ethnographic writing is produced in the field, actual composition of an ethnography is done elsewhere.’ (p. 39)

Amongst the solutions to this situation which Clifford proposed was the use of regular long quotations from informants, instead of a singular, supposedly disinterested, vantage point in realist work (pp. 46-53). This was also echoed by Charles Kurzman (in ‘Convincing Sociologists: Values and Interests in the Sociology of Knowledge’, in *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*, edited Michel Burawoy et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 250-68). Such an approach was not in itself new and was one of the reasons that Ioan Lewis described anthropologists as ‘all plagiarists’ in 1973 (Ioan M. Lewis, *The Anthropologist’s Muse* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1973), pp. 10-11, 16-17), but following the work of Clifford and Kurzman, some appear to have felt more able to present quotations without requiring wider analysis or critique.

A different set of critical perspectives were presented by Martyn Hammersley in 1992:

- Approaches based on data collection involve an imposition of the research’s assumptions and are used to generate questionable generalisations.
- Ethnographers frequently rely upon what people *say* they do, rather than observing what they *actually* do, and mediating between the two.
- Ethnographers should produce *theoretical* description of the areas they research, employing wider concepts and theories.
- In response to some of the postmodern turn, novelty of presentation or subject matter should be approached cautiously, as should clear political advocacy.
- Ethnographers should not simply dismiss judgment from others, or claims that their models are not like theories in any conventional sense. By claiming immunity from wider critique, ethnographers undermine their work being viewed as *scholarship*, and imply that it might be judged solely in terms of pragmatic utility or market appeal.
- Ethnographic realism, however, has major limits, and there is not ‘one true description that the ethnographer’s account seeks to approximate’ (p. 24)
- Many ethnographic descriptions are highly selective and are often used to bolster already-existing theories or priorities. This may not be wholly avoidable, but ethnographers should not deliberately omit relevant things, should still be guided by a search for something which can be argued to be true, and should above all understand events in context.

Martyn Hammersley, *What's Wrong with Ethnography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992)

Three years later, John van Maanen returned to the vexed question of what concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality' mean in this context, but noted how infrequent it was that ethnographers would overturn previous representations by restudying the same group of people, in contrast to scientific and historical scholarship in which data is subject to repeated scrutiny.

John van Maanen, 'An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography', in *Representation in Ethnography*, edited John van Maanen, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 1-35.

Harry Wolcott, in an essay in the same volume as van Maanen's:

- Critical of 'haphazard descriptiveness' in ethnographic work, simply listing factual information without further interpretation – for him interpretation was fundamental to separating ethnographic from merely qualitative/descriptive work.
- Culture is 'an abstraction based on the ethnographer's observations of actual behaviour' (pp. 86-7).
- Also critical of simply inclusion of lots of detail, vague references to culture, or simply labelling work as 'ethnographic'.

Harry F. Wolcott, 'Making a Study "More Ethnographic"', in *Representation in Ethnography*, edited by John van Maanen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 79-111.

('Haphazard descriptiveness' first appeared in George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, rev. 1999), p. 56, to characterise the view given by E.E. Evans-Pritchard of the work of Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead)

Thomas Hylland Eriksen:

- Fieldwork should not be idealised, nor exalted claims made for it, especially as it is often reliant upon rigid dichotomies.
- Anthropologists' careerist concerns may be more significant than any particular love of generating knowledge.
- Many anthropologists have been inclined simply to account for a particular society or culture without explaining any of the causes which more conventional historical study might reveal.
- For this reason, combined with tendencies towards 'realism', ethnography is very susceptible to reification (my term, not Eriksen's), whereby a particular existing and historically contingent state of cultural affairs is presented as if innate and inevitable.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Big Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Pluto, 2015).

Tim Ingold:

- The term ‘ethnographic’ is frequently used as ‘a modish substitute for qualitative’ (echoing Wolcott), and generates an over-abundance of secondary literature as a substitute for actually engaging in the activity.
- Fieldnotes are often spun as ‘data’, and conceptions derived at a later stage are often projected backwards.
- The term ‘ethnography’ might be dropped in place of ‘participant observation’, though Ingold was sceptical whether one can really observe while simultaneously participating.

Tim Ingold, ‘That’s enough about ethnography!’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnography Theory* vol. 4, no. 1 (2014), pp. 383-95.

Steven Lubet, a law professor, published his 2018 study *Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) in response to the success of Alice Goffman’s 2014 book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), on low-income African-American communities. He was concerned about Goffman’s apparent unwillingness to try and corroborate the claims made by some of her informants, and in particular the possibility that she could have become complicit in criminal acts herself through the course of the study, driving some of her subjects to somewhere in full knowledge that they intended to carry out a ‘hit’ there. These types of concerns are remote from anything I could imagine in musicology, so I won’t dwell directly with them, but look at the wider questions Lubet derives concerning ethnographic work (my numbering):

- (i) To what extent have the ethnographers relied on rumours or hearsay?
- (ii) How much have they fact-checked their sources?
- (iii) Have they ignored inconvenient evidence?
- (iv) Have they accepted the world of unreliable witnesses?
- (v) Have their arguments exceeded what could be factually substantiated?

Lubet also draws upon the Mitchell Duneier’s conception of an ‘ethnographic trial’, in which ethnographers must defend their work against charges of malpractice and demonstrate that they have provided ‘a reasonably reliable rendering of the social world’, not simply one untroubled by the possibility of alternative perspectives which might be provided by ‘witnesses they have never met or talked to’ (Mitchell Duneier, ‘How Not to Lie with Ethnography’. *Sociological Methodology* 41 (2011), p. 3). Duneier also elsewhere developed the concept of the ‘ethnographic fallacy’, taken from Stephen Steinberg: an ‘epistemology that relies exclusively on observation’, which ‘sharply delineates the behavior at close range but obscures the less visible structures and processes that engender and sustain the behavior.’ (Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016))

Lubet surveyed a wide range of ethnographies, and whilst finding some he felt exemplary, such as Matthew Desmond’s *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016), his findings were deeply variable:

- Ethnographers frequently rely upon hearsay.
- Many offer opinions on specialised areas that exceed their professional expertise.
- Some are far from scrupulous in checking available documentation.
- There is much use of questionable recollections from informants, or taking unreliable witnesses at face value.
- Evidence is often cherry-picked to support a prior hypothesis.
- Rumour and folklore are also rarely questioned.
- There are many abuses of anonymisation, for example creating composite individuals from multiple live subjects, without making this clear to the reader. Details from anonymous informants are often altered in ways which can change the arguments.

Lubet prescribes:

- Ethnographers should lessen reliance on unsourced generalities.
- Composites should be avoided.
- When there are ‘minor’ changes to data, this must be clearly documented.
- Direct observation should be clearly delineated from other sources, and from hearsay, rumour and folklore.
- A general attitude of scepticism should be taken towards informants
- Contrary facts and inconvenient witnesses should be included.
- Third parties should check field notes, and ethnographers fact-check each other’s work.

I believe that most of the points made by Hammersley, van Maanen, Wolcott, Eriksen, Ingold, Duneier and Lubet are valid and will shape my reading of texts on the ethnomusicology of Western art music. It is certainly true that some ethnomusicologists have moved away from the ‘realist’ model and explored experimental forms, and employed long quotations in order to emphasise a ‘dialogical’ approach, but I have seen little evidence that those working on Western art music have taken much account of the other points or even acknowledged them. To do so would be a positive step towards renewal, I believe.

Let me return to the fifth of Hammersley’s points:

- Ethnographers should not simply dismiss judgment from others, or claims that their models are not like theories in any conventional sense. [By claiming immunity from wider critique, ethnographers undermine their work being viewed as *scholarship*, and imply that it might be judged solely in terms of pragmatic utility or market appeal.]

I am not an ethnomusicologist myself in the sense defined by Kunst or many after him. As such, some may question my right to comment upon such a field. To which I would respond that I believe I have as much of a right to do so as do many self-identifying ethnomusicologists to comment on broad swathes of historical musicology, analytical musicology, study of performance practice, and other fields in which they have never been active as research-based scholars. And there is no

question that they do so, both on the methods and the areas of study, as in the following often vitriolic examples, many of them in my view crude stereotypes or straw men arguments:

Peter Dunbar Hall: Australian music syllabi are ‘colonialist’. Their approach ‘teaches all music from an analytical perspective that imposes Eurocentric ways of understanding music that can be shown to contradict the ways music’s creators may have of conceptualizing their music and its meanings.’

Peter Dunbar-Hall, ‘Training, community and systemic music education: The aesthetics of Balinese music in different pedagogic settings’, in *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by Patricia Shehan Campbell, John Drummond, Peter Dunbar-Hall, Keith Howard, Huib Schippers and Trevor Wiggins (Brisbane: Australian Academic Press, 2005), p. 128.

[Philip Bohlman: [in much study of Western art music] ‘the musical text becomes more and more important, until it achieves an independence that twentieth-century scholarship has further transformed into a seemingly unassailable hegemony. We have all witnessed the preoccupation with authentic texts of the “composer’s intent.” Emanating from the scholarly attention to text are portrayals of Western art music as a canon of “absolute music,” of music totally international and purged of any ethnic or historical particularity.’

Philip V. Bohlman, ‘Of Yekes and Chamber Music in Israel: Ethnomusicological Meaning in Western Music History’, in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, edited by Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman and Bruno Nettl (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 255.]

Philip Bohlman: ‘To the extent that musicologists concerned largely with the traditions of Western art music were content with a singular canon- any singular canon that took a European-American concert tradition as a given – they were excluding musics, peoples, and cultures. They were, in effect, using the process of disciplining to cover up the racism, colonialism, and sexism that underlie many of the singular canons of the West. They bought into these “-isms” just as surely as they coopted an “-ology.” Canons formed from “Great Men” and “Great Music” forged virtually unassailable categories of self and Other, one to discipline and reduce to singularity, the other to belittle and impugn.’

(Philip V. Bohlman, ‘Epilogue: Musics and Canons’, in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons*, edited Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 198).

Christopher Small: ‘It is my belief that a symphony concert is a celebration of the ‘sacred history’ of the western middle classes, and an affirmation of faith in their values as the abiding stuff of life. [...]

Without an awareness of the ritual function of music, the ‘researches’ of Boulez and his colleagues of the Paris IRCAM remain a naive, gee-whiz celebration of the most superficial aspects of modern technology, and claims made by them and for them that they are attempting to come to terms with its problems and possibilities for the sake of the community as a whole seem no more credible than similar claims made by ICI, British Nuclear Fuels Limited – or Buckminster Fuller, whose ‘rational madness’ (to

use Alex Comfort's telling phrase) seems often to be mirrored in Boulez's writings about music.'

Christopher Small, 'Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the Nature of a Symphony Concert', in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 19, 29.

Bruno Nettl: 'the music school's social model is the symphony orchestra – a replication of a factory or a plantation – with its dictatorial arm-waving director, the hierarchical structure of its sections, its rigid class structure that doesn't permit promotion of the first violist [*sic*] to conductor, with the mediation of the concert master (overseer), who presents the orchestra to the conductor (owner). Music schools are usually run more autocratically than other departments....'

Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, new edition (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 189.

Georgina Born: 'the evidence of profound public antipathy to serialist music cannot be ignored and must be translated into a transformed compositional practice or risk a music that cannot communicate, because no one will listen';
'The aesthetic impotence of an "autonomous modernism confronted historically with the aesthetic vibrancy of popular cultural forms";
'the sense of sterility attached to composition techniques such as serialism based originally on the primacy of pitch, the lack of an approach to musical form, the errors of mid-century rationalism and scientism, the conceptual weakness of *musique concrete* – research on timbre and perception has been held, at IRCAM and more widely, to offer ways forward.'

Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutions of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 6, 39, 198.

Stephen Cottrell: in the work of 'traditional' musicologists 'There is seldom room in their texts for other voices, except those fellow academics who are deemed worthy of inclusion for the purpose of theoretical engagement or as an obligation arising out of academic convention.'

Stephen Cottrell, *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

In the wider two-part article to which I will give a reference at the end of this paper, I provide a wide range of counter-examples to Cottrell's blanket claims.

I am not going to respond to these by making equally blanket statements about the whole field of ethnomusicology, but will limit myself, as I have done elsewhere, to the specific field of ethnomusicology of Western Art Music, of which I have read in detail almost all of the key texts. I believe there continues to be much of great value in more established forms of musicology, in canonical composers in the Western art tradition, the symphony concert, the conservatory, and modernist and serialist music. As such, I believe the work that generates such dismissive remarks towards these fields should be subject to the same degree of critical scrutiny as its writers routinely apply to others. Both John Blacking and Henry Kingsbury have written critically of

the idea that some music should be studied ‘on its own terms’; I believe the same is true of ethnomusicology.

So, I will now give an overview of this work, viewed relative to these meta-critical perspectives offered by Hammersley, Lubet, Wolcott and others. Not all of this has been written by ethnomusicologists or others working in academic music departments, but is regularly cited by ethnomusicologists as part of their own canon, so is relevant here for that reason. One of the first studies of this type was by sociologist Robert Faulkner, published in 1973, a balanced account of perceptions relating to hierarchies between orchestra players and conductors.

Robert Faulkner, ‘Orchestra Interaction: Some Features of Communication and Authority in an Artistic Organization’. *Sociological Quarterly* 14 (1973), pp. 147–57.

Then in 1982, Catherine M. Cameron successfully defended a PhD dissertation on ‘experimentalism’ in American music, which was published in revised form in 1996. This was one of the only such studies either then or now to examine some of the nationalistic ideologies behind the aesthetic positions of many of the composers. However, it lacked any meaningful conception of the ‘experimental’, which had already been extensively theorised prior to Cameron’s thesis, and like many subsequent studies, relied almost exclusively on composers’ own pronouncements on their own work, not least in terms of its difference from their portrayals of their European counterparts. In a way which is atypical of this literature, Cameron is not afraid to unpack some of the statements of her sources in a critical manner; the problem has to do with a lack of the basic musical competence required to deal with the aural as well as written evidence.

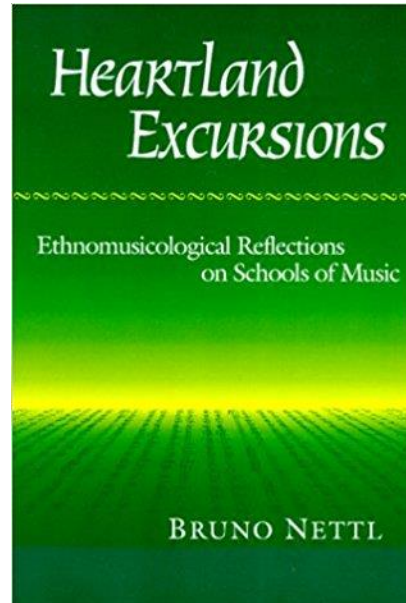
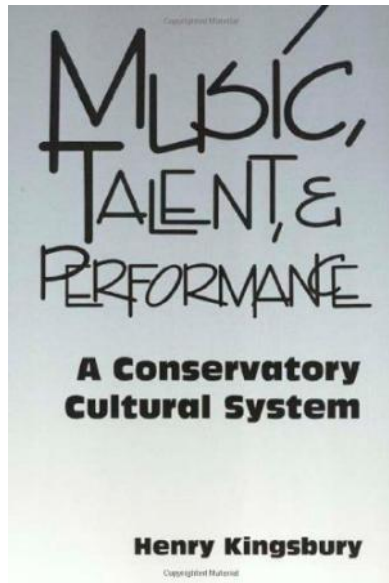
Catherine M. Cameron, ‘Dialectics in the Arts: Composer Ideology and Culture Change’ (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL, 1982). Then *Dialectics in the Arts: The Rise of Experimentalism in American Music* (Westport, CO, and London: Praeger, 1996).

Then in 1987, Christopher Small took a reasonably standard cultural anthropological approach of the rituals of a symphony concert, considering spatial layout of buildings, players and audiences, the logistics of obtaining tickets, behavioural conventions, stage conventions, character of music played, and so on. But Small disregarded the historical contingency and variability of many of these factors, instead portraying the ritual as if atemporal, a far from atypical anthropological approach to which I will return. Furthermore, he made very extravagant claims about the motivations of listeners, without presenting any evidence for these other than a set of easy stereotypes.

Christopher Small, ‘Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the Nature of a Symphony Concert’, in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 6-32.

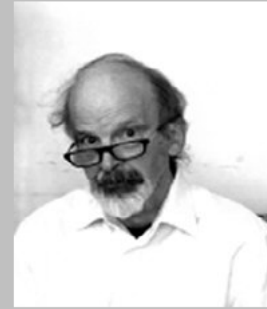
In a manner identified by D. Soyini Madison, in his 2005 book *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), Small shows a clear tendency towards ‘domination’ of his subjects (concertgoers), who are patronised without the opportunity to respond. This trait was mirrored in various

subsequent publications as the field expanded, especially in Henry Kingsbury's *Music Talent, & Performance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and Bruno Nettl's *Heartland Excursions* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press: 1995), both studies of music conservatories, though Kingsbury made the grandiose claim that his work was presented 'less as an ethnography of a conservatory than as an ethnography of music' (p. 14).



Kingsbury's book features many major generalisations about music, pedagogy, analysis, canons, prestige, audience and so on, which cannot be independently tested since Kingsbury's institution remains unnamed (though Nettl suggests it may be the New England Conservatory). He attributes many motivations to teachers, students and administrators, and even makes some clearly erroneous claims which do not inspire wider faith in the care taken in the study, for example listing Hindemith, who had a major career as a viola player in the Amar Quartet, also premiering Walton's Viola Concerto, as well as directing the Collegium Musicum at Yale University, as an example of those who 'achieved prominence both as composers and theorists, but not as performers'. Kingsbury claims that naming teachers can lend prestige to students, with which I would not disagree, but this is a little ironic when one notes that on his own website, Kingsbury describes himself as 'A onetime disciple of the late Alan Merriam'. This is however nothing unusual, and I see no reason to believe that ethnomusicology is any less permeated by canonical figures, generally 'great men' (and a few women), and institutionalised prestige linked to association with some of these.

I was born in 1943. I have degrees from Oberlin College (A.B. in music), and the University of Michigan (M.Mus. in piano). As a young man I was active in anti-war organizing and other progressive causes in Boston. I then studied ethnomusicology at Indiana University (M.A. & Ph.D. in anthropology). I have held appointments at Elizabeth City State and Oberlin Colleges, Boston, Brown, Clemson, & Tufts Universities, and U-Mass/Boston. A onetime disciple of the late Alan Merriam, I was the first scholar to conduct an ethnographic-anthropological study of western art music (Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System, [1988, Temple University Press]).

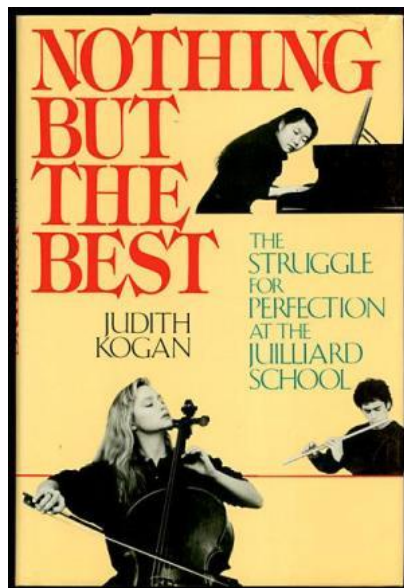


From <http://henrykingsbury.com/hokbio.htm>

Otherwise, Kingsbury writes disparagingly about the concept of ‘talent’, though without giving any evidence from psychology or elsewhere which might substantiate the converse argument with respect to the performance of Western art music – that there are no differences in aptitude, and so all could achieve the highest level. He equally disparages terms such as ‘expression’ and playing ‘with feeling’, which I would agree are vague, but in my experience tacitly understood in terms of particular stylistic attributes to do with phrasing, rhythm, voicing, pedalling, vibrato, and so on. It is difficult to imagine the value of any instrumental or vocal teaching which disregarded these.

Nettl’s study is similar in nature. Like Kingsbury, he disregards a good deal of historical and contemporary evidence, for example in a very simplistic picture of the history of the orchestra, in order to pass judgement ‘from above’ or dominate his area of study, replete with loaded language, and an almost wholly derogatory view of Western art music compared to an idealised one of music from elsewhere in the world.

I have suggested elsewhere that Kingsbury and Nettl’s books resemble, more than some might like to admit, that by Judith Kogan published around the same time, a scandal-ridden tabloid account of the Juilliard School, describing the ferocious (*Nothing But the Best: The Struggle for Perfection at the Juilliard School* (New York: Random House, 1987)) competition, bitchy gossip, ritual of auditions, pressure upon students, godlike nature of the teachers, central role of competitions, and so on.

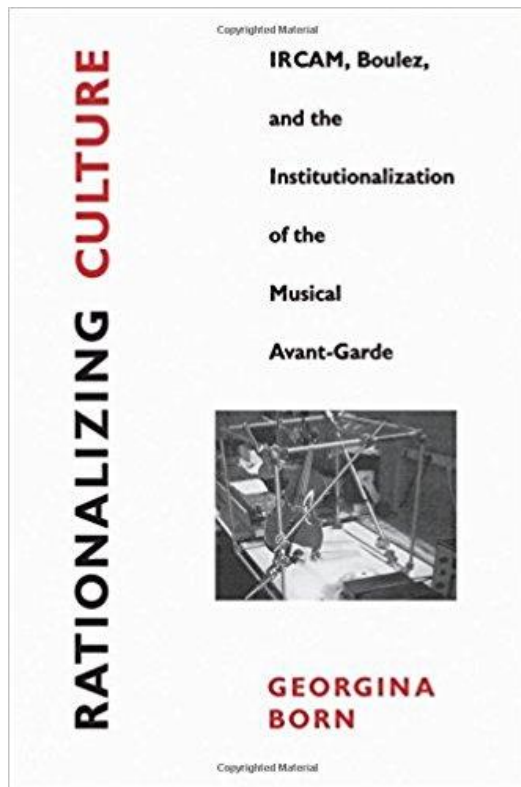


There is nothing in Kogan's book I do not recognise from my own time studying at Juilliard, nor do I doubt that some of the desirable phenomena described by Kingsbury and Nettl can also be found. I should say here that I speak as a campaigner on abuse in musical education who has worked with some who suffered abuse at music schools and conservatories to bring their stories to light, and have submitted evidence to the UK national inquiry on child abuse on these issues – I only point this out to make clear that I do not have a rose-tinted view of musical education, far from it. But it is clear that these three books are all highly agenda-driven and selective accounts, and the difference between Kogan and the others is more one of literary style (more racy and less sober) rather than content. All three have a uniformly dismissive towards conservatories and most of those who work there, few of whom have the *academic* platform available to Kingsbury and Nettl, and as such cannot really respond as equals.

The other prominent text of this type is Georgina Born's 1995 study of the *Institute de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM), *Rationalizing Culture: : IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutions of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). This has been roundly criticised in some detail before now by Célestin Deliège, Björn Heile, Richard Herrmann (in an especially incisive critique), Ben Watson, and myself, for a range of methodological, ideological and other problems, primary among them a lack of wider contextual knowledge such as might be supplied by technical concepts or wider knowledge of historical or aesthetic study, leading to serious and falsifiable misrepresentations of music understood as little more than a stylistic 'brand'. I won't add to this now, other than to say that hypothetically, a purely anthropological study undertaken without engagement with the actual music produced (as with Cameron's study), such as would require listening, in order simply to use the institution and music as a window onto a wider culture, might be possible (though I remain sceptical), but Born wishes for more than this, and to pronounce on the actual music.

There are similar problems with the pronouncements of Yara El-Ghadban on contemporary Western art music, derived primarily from the views of other

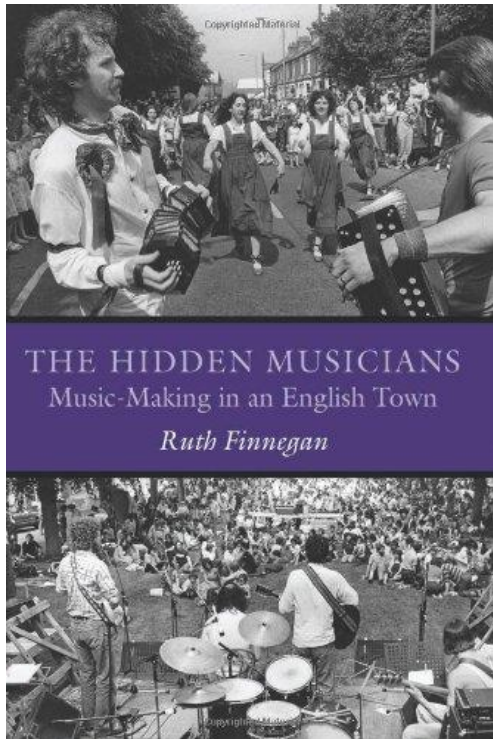
anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, without external verification, thus disregarding Hammersley's dialectic and Lubet's questions (i), (ii), and (iv), or Hettie Malcolmson's construction of a trinity of 'mainstream'/'new complexity'/'experimental' approaches to composition on the basis of casual remarks by a handful of UK composers, without wider exploration of the provenance and aesthetic meanings of such concepts. In all these three cases, Hammersley's requirement of contextual knowledge is also significantly lacking, and it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise, without genuine musical engagement.



Small, Kingsbury, Nettl and Born epitomise what I would characterise as a 'first phase' of ethnographic work on Western art music and its institutions: quite uniformly hostile to their subject. By the criteria of Clifford or Kurzman, these writers fall short, by not giving their subjects a voice in the academic world: on the contrary, they pointedly omit and perspectives which do not concur with their own, and as such they constitute acts of domination.

A different approach can be found in Ruth Finnegan's *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), very much from the 'realist' tradition. This is an obsessively detailed description of every aspect of music-making in the town of Milton Keynes, from orchestras, through amateur choirs and brass bands, to folk groups and over 100 small bands, packed with long passages of prose and lists of figures, right down to detailed information of who does the washing-up.

But the findings are quite modest, as a result of a lack of incisive research questions, critical dialogue with the subjects or much beyond some rather thin interpretation, this resembles a government inspector's report more than a scholarly monograph, primarily because it entails Wolcott's 'haphazard descriptiveness'.



But this type of model has been influential. Related in approach is Kay Kaufman Shelemay's essay on the Boston early music movement, 'Toward an Ethnomusicology of the Early Music Movement: Thoughts on Bridging Disciplines and Musical Worlds', *Ethnomusicology* 45 (2001), pp. 1–29. Here are a few of Shelemay's findings:

'Early music practitioners, speaking from their own experiences, referred often to the scholarly literature and critical editions, which they know intimately and on which they draw in preparing detailed notes for concert programs and published recordings.'

'Thus the early music movement, while drawing on music of the historical past, is powerfully informed by the creative impulses of its practitioners and the aesthetics of the present.'

'Musicians in all of the ensembles with which we worked testified to the centrality of creative activity in their conceptualization and performance of musical repertory.'

'Many of our associates provided considerable detail about their instruments, conveying not just extraordinary technical knowledge, but the instrument's history and social significance with great elegance.'

'For example, violinist Daniel Stepner noted the creative role of members of the Boston Museum Trio, consisting of himself, gambist Laura Jeppesen, and keyboardist John Gibbons, in such basic and little discussed processes as selecting and formulating their own repertory:

There's lots of music that's appropriate for us to play together, but very little, relatively little music that was written specifically for these instruments. (Daniel Stepner, 22 October 1996)'

I believe these not only to be obvious to anyone with a cursory knowledge of the movement, but also covered, and in considerably more detail, in a range of scholarly literature published prior to Shelemay's article, such as the essays in Nicholas Kenyon's volume on *Authenticity and Early Music*, or the writings of Harry Haskell, Richard Taruskin, Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell. Shelemay reveals only that the Boston Early Music movement resembles others found elsewhere, passes very quickly over deeper questions such as the meaning of 'early music' and its relationship to wider Western traditions, and lacks contextual knowledge about, for example, the shift from a counter-cultural aspect to early music performance in the 1950s and 1960s to the much 'purer' and more rarefied approach found by the English *a cappella* movement from the 1970s, which could have meaningfully informed such an exploration.

I have analysed in more detail elsewhere three particular subsequent case studies, all relating to areas to which I can bring a degree of contextual knowledge and expertise: the DVD-ROM and related article by Amanda Bayley and Michael Clarke on the music of Michael Finnissy and its performance; Stephen Cottrell's study of *Professional Music-Making in London*, and Pirkko Moisala's monograph on Kaija Saariaho. I will give a very brief overview of my findings on these.

Bayley and Clarke's DVD, for which most of the associated articles are self-legitimising pieces relating to the authors' methodology or 'outtakes' from the work, consists largely of a series of quotations and interview clips with Finnissy and the performers, as well as a series of scanned score excerpts and parts of the sketches. These are presented with only minimal commentary, interrogation or reflection; what there is includes claims which are less remarkable than they might seem with contextual knowledge of the wider and not insubstantial body of Finnissy scholarship, especially relating to Finnissy's use of quotations and other borrowings, random techniques, or unsynchronised parts, a much more common feature of Finnissy's music than one might imagine if this were one's only point of reference. There is however some fruitful material with figures about percentages of rehearsal time spent on play, co-ordination, sound quality and general conversation, as well as some valuable questions about Finnissy's use of metaphorical language in rehearsal.

[Wolcott, Marcus and Fischer on 'haphazard descriptiveness', as echoed by Margaret LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, on the distinction between data gathering and ethnography.

Ethnographic and qualitative data collection produces piles and piles of raw data—stacks of interviews, piles of field notes, collections of reports, documents, newspaper clippings, and artifacts, boxes of audio- and video-recordings, and hundreds and hundreds of cards, slips of paper, maps, and photographs and digital materials. [...] While these piles are indeed the raw material for ethnographies, by themselves, they do not create an ethnography. Rather, *ethnographers create ethnography in a sometimes tedious and often exhilarating two-step process of analysis of raw data and interpretation of analyzed data*. Analysis reduces data to a story ethnographers can tell; interpretation tells readers what that story means. Without both, ethnographic data is quite literally meaning-less.

Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Interpretation of Ethnographic Data: A Mixed Methods Approach*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Altamira, 2013), pp. 1-2]

It would certainly be unfair to accuse Bayley and Clarke purely of presenting raw data, but this the analysis and interpretation are rather slight. They do not analyse, critique, interrogate or contextualise statements of composers or performers, let alone consider the dichotomy between what they say and what they do, as required by Hammersley and Lubyet.



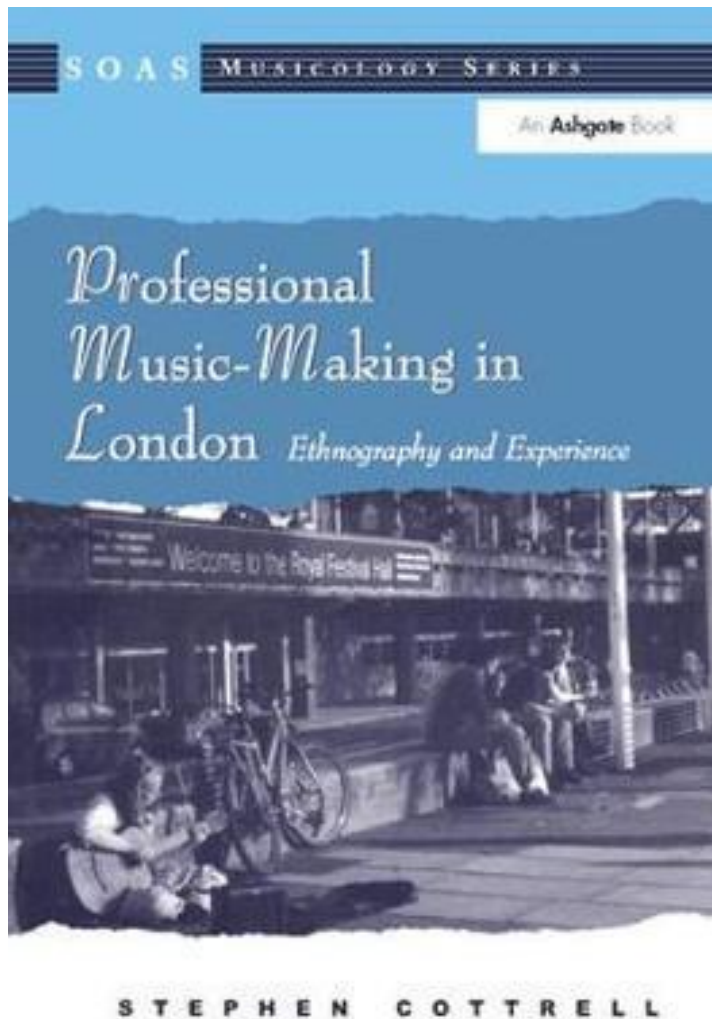
Stephen Cottrell's study is undoubtedly more methodologically aware than that of Bayley and Clarke. It draws heavily upon quotations, as advocated by Clifford and Kurzman, derived from keeping diaries and sending out questionnaires while working as a freelance musician, one of the few cases of an emic study of this nature. These are organised into several categories, with a certain amount of commentary, most notably in a chapter on 'Musicality and Individuality', dealing with systems for valorising certain types of sounds.

Cottrell arrives at findings to do with perceptions of musicians' pay (though without figures supplied), an explanation of the workings of the deputising system, the need for social skills and consensus amongst musicians, the greater freedoms afforded by playing in smaller groups, a lot of resentment towards conductors (details are given of players giving a Nazi salute to one German conductor, without further commentary), that concerts run through the year, how different orchestral players have differing amounts of work to do, and so on. Most of these would I believe be familiar to those with experience of professional music-making. That does not negate the importance of making them available for wider readers, compared to Shelemay, whose study did not really reveal much which was not already available in existing scholarly literature.

But the findings do not seem that remarkable, and much consists of a relatively unmediated rendition of passing views of insiders and gossip. This is distinct to, say, Marcia Herndon's 1988 study of the Oakland Symphony Orchestra, which features some figures relating to the economics of running the orchestra, and some contextual information about its history.

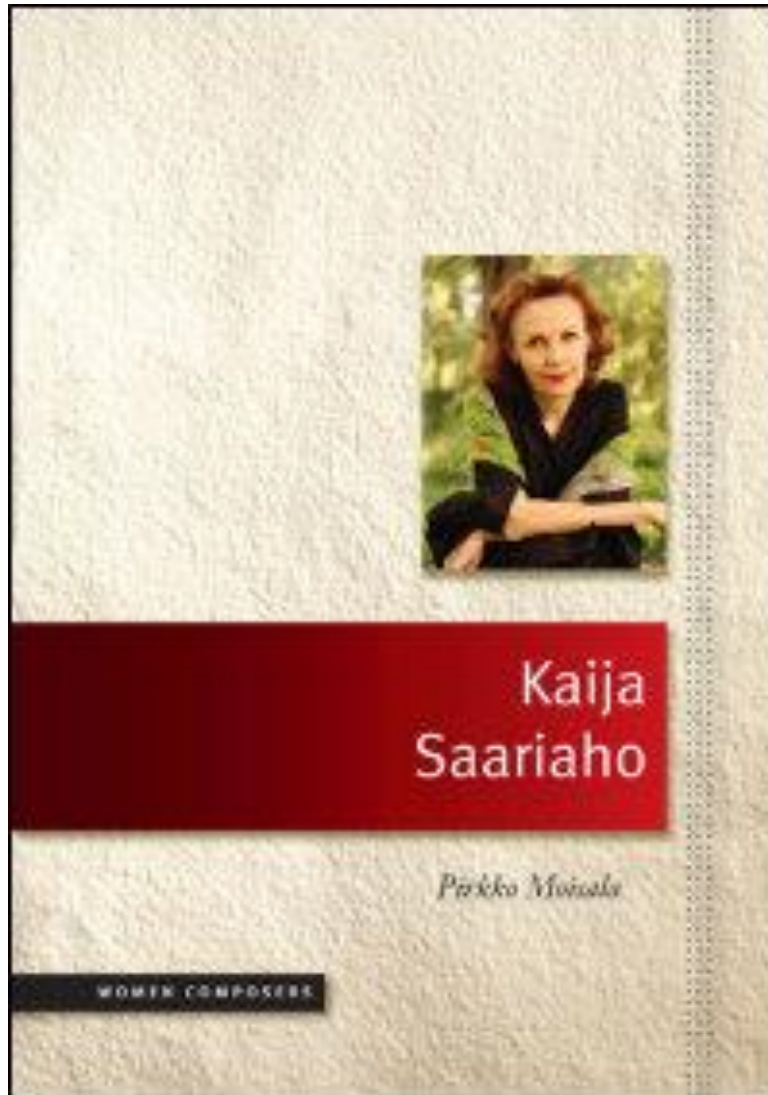
Clifford's points about 'expanded communication and intercultural influence' and the difficulties inherent in conceiving 'bounded, independent cultures' are pertinent here. Many of the professional musicians surveyed here will also work in other countries or with other musicians from elsewhere, but the treatment of London as an almost self-contained 'culture' limits the possibility of engaging with this; a parallel problem as with Malcolmson's study of a range of British composers. But Cottrell's work is beholden to the notion of a 'culture' which as Wolcott points out is an abstraction, and I would say could be viewed as a type of mystification. Absent from the study is any consideration of economics and the role of private capital; instead 'culture' is afforded an ontological primacy over wider social and economic forces. To view the state of professional music-making in London as something that simply *is* would be a case of Steinberg's ethnographic fallacy and the type of reification detailed by Eriksen. Without sustained engagement with history and economics, causes and determinants, ultimately the study can only be an uncontextualized snapshot of the particular group of informants in a specific city at a particular time.

This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of a highly ideological approach and attitude, excluding other methods and scholarship, including that on professionalisation of musical life. Cottrell's dismissive view of the whole of 'traditional musicology' mentioned before not only does not resemble a very large amount of work through its history, as already mentioned, but needs to disregard the study of music reception, performance practice, sociology and social history. It is not the case that traditional musicology has ignored social and cultural context, or other factors, simply not viewed study of the sounding music and its immanent properties as a secondary concern compared to this, or one which can be omitted entirely.



Pirkko Moisala, in her monograph on the composer Kaija Saariaho, makes explicit reference to Bakhtin and ‘the heterophony of meanings given to musical works’, echoing Clifford. Her self-stated ethnographic fieldwork methods include interviewing Saariaho, musicians, agents and conductors with whom she has worked, and other musicians familiar with her work, as well as observation of rehearsals and performances. In an associated methodological article on the project, Moisala presents as a main aim ‘to reveal the ingredients of Saariaho’s music, to explain why it is as it is, and how it has developed over the years’ (Moisala, ‘Reflections on an Ethnomusicological Study of a Contemporary Western Art Music Composer’. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20, no. 3 (2011), pp. 443–51), but using ‘a research methodology other than score-based analysis’. There are certainly other methods available for analysing music involving electronics, as much of Saariaho’s does, using sonic spectra and the like, but Moisala does not use these: instead she relies on generalised descriptions of rehearsals and performances and text from interviews, in a manner familiar from looser forms of journalism. There are many unmediated quotes from critics, except where the critic is not wholly favourable, in which situation Moisala attempts to pathologise them rather than engage with their views. This is a long way from Duneier’s ‘stance of the skeptic, often not accepting accounts at face value’; rather what results resembles the types of assemblages of critical quotations routinely found in publicists’ materials. Furthermore, as with Born’s work, the study

presents very simplistic views of a wider contemporary music culture, relying upon the types of rigid dichotomies (e.g. between serialism ‘for the eyes’ and spectral music ‘for the ears’) criticised by Eriksen, with a lack of wider contextual knowledge about such things as different stages in the histories of electronic music and *musique concrete*, or widespread use of extended instrumental techniques on the part of many other composers as well as Saariaho. No attempt is made to explore plural opinions on these matters, which render the Bakhtinian claims unconvincing.



In the event of Duneier’s ‘ethnographic trial’, the work of Small, Kingsbury, Nettle, Born, Bayley and Clarke and Moisala would be vulnerable because of sidestepping perspectives from others. However, Bayley and Clarke, and Moisala, are not really presenting a ‘rendering of the social world’, nor drawing conclusions concerning people, so their work would not really be considered ethnographic according to Wolcott’s definition. Both are however also susceptible to Wolcott’s critique of ‘haphazard descriptiveness’.

The calls for a more novel format to that provided by realist ethnographers is found to a degree in Cottrell’s work, much less so in Moisala’s, while Bayley and Clarke is distinguished primarily through the use of the DVD medium. Hammersley’s dialectic

between respondents' perceptions and reality is acute in the work of Cameron and Born, and afflicts that of my three case studies, especially that of Moisala. Cottrell's is the only one of these which could be said to embody some degree of theoretical description. Hammersley's concerns about selective ethnographic descriptions with deliberate omissions cannot really be assessed for these three, but there are concerns in this respect about the work of Small, Kingsbury, Nettle and Born too, as there are about limitations in terms of contextual knowledge. Bayley and Clarke, Cottrell and Moisala do idealise fieldwork, as critiqued by Eriksen.

Finnegan, Shelemay, Bayley and Clarke, and especially Moisala, largely constitute description rather than analysis. Here a more common understanding of the term 'description' should be distinguished from Clifford Geertz's theorisation of 'thick description', which overlaps with what I would identify as analysis, encompassing synthetic interpretation, knowledge of cultural codes and other contextual information and application of theoretical ideas; Geertz simply disliked the term 'analysis'. Wolcott believed incorporation of thick description to be 'a thin basis for ethnographic claims-making' (p. 91), but he appears to have understood the concept more narrowly than Geertz. Hammersley insisted that descriptions only become theoretical when 'they *apply* theories to the understanding of particular phenomena' (pp. 24-25), and that questions remain of the reasons for preferring one type of description over another, whereas Eriksen distinguished description and analysis in terms of critical scholarship, entailing concepts which go beyond what can simply be found from the perspectives of the subjects. It is not clear that this is the case with Bayley and Clarke, nor Moisala. But the crucial distinction may be between analysis and *repetition* rather than description. By simply letting subjects 'speak for themselves' without questioning, analysis, dialogue or critique runs the danger of rendering such subjects as 'noble savages', an archetype which has long pervaded ethnography (see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)).

In terms of Lubeck's five tests, all my three case studies fare relatively well, though not necessarily all the others:

- (i) To what extent have the ethnographers relied on rumours or hearsay?
An issue with Kingsbury and Nettle.
- (ii) How much have they fact-checked their sources?
A major issue with the work of Cameron and Born.
- (iii) Have they ignored inconvenient evidence?
Cottrell's work has the potential for this, but there is no indication of having done so, unlike with Cameron, Kingsbury, Nettle and Born; also with Bayley and Clarke's disregarding of their relevant scholarship, or Moisala's lack of diverse perspectives.
- (iv) Have they accepted the word of unreliable witnesses?
Cottrell's musicians may not be wholly reliable in terms of their views on musicians and conductors, as with the subjects of the studies of Cameron, Born and Malcolmson.
- (v) Have their arguments exceeded what could be factually substantiated?
There are no real arguments put forward in Bayley and Clarke, or Moisala. Cottrell's are of an appropriate scope on the basis of the data employed, but this is not the case for Small, Kingsbury, Nettle or Born.

I also want to mention the possible connection between ethnography and *hagiography*, in the sense defined by the online Cambridge Dictionary as writing ‘that represents the person as perfect or much better than they really are, or the activity of writing about someone in this way’. It is not difficult to see how in a post-colonial context, an ethnographer may be concerned primarily with giving their subjects a voice, and be reticent about contextualisation or critical analysis of such subjects for fear of domination or other means of perpetuating a power imbalance. But when transplanted to a non-colonial context, without the same types of power discrepancies, such an attitude constrains the possibility of more dispassionate and critical inquiry and engenders an often reverential tone that can be considered hagiographic. The work of Bayley and Clarke, and Moisola are definitely hagiographic in this sense, as are other writings by Yara El-Gahdban or Tina K. Ramnarine. Cottrell is unwilling to question his subjects, but hagiography may be too strong a term here.

Furthermore, considering how often many of these writers are often highly critical of an allegedly inflexible process of canonisation within Western art music, it is noteworthy how the same process occurs with respect to their own texts. In the sources I mention on the slide, the texts of Small, Kingsbury, Finnegan, Nettle, Born, Shelemay, Cottrell and others are invariably given a hallowed mention, forming a catechism together with other texts in the ethnomusicological canon such as those of Merriam, Nettle, John Blacking or Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod.

(For examples of such canonisation, see Shelemay 2001, p. 5, Cottrell 2004, pp. 4-6, El-Ghabran 2009, pp. 153-54, Malcolmson 2013, p. 115; also Jonathan Stock, ‘New Musicologies, Old Musicologies: Ethnomusicology and the Study of Western Music’. *Current Musicology* 62 (1997), pp. 40-41; Nicholas Cook, ‘We Are All (Ethno)musicologists Now’, in *The New (Ethno)musicologies*, edited Henry Stobart (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008), pp. 48-49; Caroline Bithell, ‘Praisesong to the Ancestors and the Post-New Nuclear Family’, *ibid.* pp. 79-80; Laudan Nooshin, ‘Introduction to the Special Issue: The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music’, *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20, no. 3 (2011), pp. 286-87; Melissa Dobson and Stephanie E. Pitts, ‘Classical Cult or Learning Community? Exploring New Audience Members’ Social and Musical Responses to First-time Concert Attendance’, *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20 no. 3 (2011), p. 354; Eric Martin Usner, ‘“The Condition of Mozart”: Mozart year 2006 and the New Vienna’, *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20 no. 3 (2011), p. 415; Stephen Cottrell, Review of Lisa McCormick, *Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music*, *Music and Letters* 98, no. 2 (2017))

This is another manifestation of hagiographical tendencies, with contrasts strongly with the blanket dismissals of various other fields of musicological inquiry, suggesting territorial concerns rather than more balanced scholarly engagement. Such territorial concerns are maybe not surprising: in the case of the UK, there is to my knowledge only one department offering a degree specifically in ethnomusicology, SOAS, which is itself not undergoing the best of times at present. What have grown in tertiary musical education are more practically or vocationally-oriented degrees in popular music, music technology and production, musical theatre, and certain types of performance. By concentrating their ire primarily upon other types of more traditionally ‘academic’ study of music, and battling over small territory defined primarily in terms of methodology (rather than necessarily being about encouraging the study of a wider range of global musics), these ethnomusicologists are in danger of ceding the ground entirely to practical/vocational study, undermining their primary allies who wish for music degrees to be more than this. The recent example of the University of Monash disestablishing the study of both musicology and

ethnomusicology, in favour of practically-oriented study, may be an ominous portent of other things to come in this respect.

[The growth of ethnomusicology at home may be in part a response to fears of engagement with some activity which may inevitably be construed as colonialist. I would wholly dispute any necessary connection between colonialism and the study of geographically or socially distant cultures from one's own (as with historically distant ones), but would claim that one of the most colonial and hegemonic of all attitudes – that which portrays non-Western cultures as somehow standing outside of time and history – is no more valid when applied to Western art music practices than to any other musical contexts, and limits much of the work I have been describing.]

I mentioned earlier the lack of engagement with aural data on the part of Born, and Moisala, and this is true of many other writings in this tradition, to such an extent that one could have substituted one type of aural experience with another without the results being affected. This limits the possible conclusions specifically to do with the music, as some of the writers clearly wish to provide.

Also, in some cases (Cameron, Kingsbury, Nettle, Finnegan, Shelemay, Bayley and Clarke, Cottrell, though not so much Moisala) spoken data is assigned a clear primacy over that which is written, reflecting wider deep-rooted hierarchies of speech and writing existing in Western culture.

I would definitely not wish to dismiss the value of ethnographic approaches, by any means, but remain unconvinced by many of these writers' apparent need to assert a clear superiority of a construction of ethnography over most other approaches, such as might involve historical knowledge, aural- or score-based analysis, or critical reflection on the words of musicians, critics, and others. A concomitant dismissal of participant observation by other musicologists would be no less petty, and I would always resist such a position for that reason. All sources of material that can inform knowledge are worth considering; what matters is how such knowledge is generated by the scholar. It would be unreasonable to expect any work to do 'everything', but a little more balanced recognition of the limits of various approaches, including some traditional ones, would be a more constructive way forward than endless turf wars.

Wolcott wrote in 1995 that 'in our enthusiasm for turning a critical eye on everyone else, we have attended rather little to ethnography's own assumptions and blind spots' (p. 88). I believe this attention is required more consistently to ethnomusicological work dealing with Western art music.