Worlds of Music

An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples

Fifth Edition

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and its history. Knowing they would be asked these questions, blues singers prepared their answers, sometimes reading and then repeating what writers had already said about blues, sometimes having fun with their questioners and deliberately misleading them, and sometimes answering truthfully based on their experiences. This pattern is repeating itself today with hip-hop. Many times the subject of music is history itself. The Homeric poets sang about Odysseus; Serbian *guslars* sang about the deeds of their heroes; European ballads tell stories of nobles and commoners; African *griots* sing tribal genealogies and history, and the Arab *sha'ir,* or poet-singers, recount the travels and definitive battles of their tribal ancestors.

Today, digital recorders, computers, and multimedia programs are revolutionizing community music history in the West, for they empower musicians and audience alike to record what they want to hear, represent it as they wish, and listen to it again and again; in this way they gain a kind of control over their history never before experienced. In studying the history of a music-culture, or some aspect of it, you need to know not only what that history is but also who tells or writes that history and what stake the historian has in it.

As you read through each of the case studies in the following chapters, bear this underlying music-culture **performance model** in mind. Because each of the case studies focuses on music and performance, you can use this model to understand how each chapter moves among experience, performance, community, memory, and history. Musical analysis is an important part of this procedure. Unlike the analyst who investigates Western classical music by looking at the composer's written score, ethnomusicologists must usually deal with music that exists only in performance, without notation or instructions from a composer. The ethnomusicologist usually transcribes the music—that is, notates it—and then analyzes its structure. But it is impossible to understand structure fully without knowing the cultural "why" along with the musical "what."

The Four Components of a Music-Culture

A music-culture ultimately rests in the people themselves—their ideas, their actions, and the sound they produce (Merriam 1964:32–33). For that reason, we now introduce another way of talking about all these aspects of music—a component model of a music-culture. This model, which complements the performance model we have just discussed, is divided into four parts: ideas about music, activities involving music, repertories of music, and the material culture of music (Table 1.1).

IDEAS ABOUT MUSIC

Music and the Belief System

What is music, and what is not? Is music human, divine, or both? Is music good and useful for humankind or is it potentially harmful? Does music belong to individuals, to groups, as if it were private property? Or is music a public resource that should be treated as common property? (We will have more to say about who owns music in the section "Activities Involving Music.") These questions reach

TABLE 1.1 The Four Components of a Music Culture.

I. Ideas about music
   A. Music and the belief system
   B. Aesthetics of music
   C. Contexts for music
   D. History of music
II. Activities involving music
III. Repertories of music
   A. Style
   B. Genres
   C. Texts
   D. Composition
   E. Transmission
   F. Movement
IV. Material culture of music

into a music-culture's basic ideas concerning the nature of human society, art, and the universe. Cultures vary enormously in their answers to these questions, and the answers often are subtle, even paradoxical; they are embodied in rituals that try to reconcile love and hate, life and death, the natural and the cultural. In Chapter 8 we will see how the Chinese concept of complementarity, yin and yang, often symbolized by ☯, is an integration of divergence and accord that applies to music as it does to history, language, geography, and religion. Further, the answers may change over time even within a single music-culture. For example, a medieval Christian would have trouble understanding one of today's folk masses.

Throughout the book you will see many examples of how belief systems and music-cultures interact. You will see in Chapter 2 that music is a major part of Navajo ceremonies to cure disease. Navajos understand the medical theories of the Euro-American world, and they use Western medicine. But they also believe that certain kinds of illness, such as depression, indicate that the person's relationship to the natural and the human world is out of balance. Further, Navajos view nature as a powerful force capable of speaking directly to humans and teaching them the songs and prayers for the curing rituals that restore harmony. Music is so important to Native Americans that their stories of the creation of the universe are expressed traditionally in ceremonial chants (see Figure 1.8).

In Chapter 3 you will see that among the Ewe of Ghana, funerals feature singing, dancing, and drumming because the ancestral spirits, as well as their living descendants, love music and dance. Similarly, in Chapter 9 you will find that among the Quichua of Ecuador, as well as other Roman Catholic cultures of Latin America, music and dance are integral to the child's wake, a ceremony that takes place when a baptized infant dies. Joyous singing and dancing in the presence of death is understood as an affirmation of life. The *ragas* of India, considered in Chapter 6, are thought to have musical personalities, to express particular moods. In Chapter 5 you will learn why music is essential for weddings in Poland and Bulgaria, as well as how major world religions impacted musical practices in many parts of Europe. As you read through the chapters in this book, see how each music-culture relates music to its worldview.

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FIGURE 1.8

Mr. and Mrs. Walker Calhoun, holding eagle feathers. Big Cove, near Cherokee, North Carolina, 1989. The Calhouns are leaders in preserving traditional songs and dances among the east coast Cherokee.

Aesthetics of Music

When is a song beautiful? When is it beautifully sung? What voice quality is pleasing, and what grates on the ear? How should a musician dress? How long should a performance last? Not all cultures agree on these questions about what is proper and what is beautiful. Some people in the United States find Chinese opera singing strained and artificial, but some Chinese find the European bel canto opera style imprecise and unpleasant. Harmonic intervals considered "ugly" in some parts of Europe are desirable in others (CD 2, Track 9). Some jazz saxophone players (and listeners) favor a "hot," buzzy, honking sound while others prefer the "cool," smooth, saxophone timbre found in classical music. Music-cultures can be characterized by preferences in sound quality and performance practice, all of which are **aesthetic** discriminations; that is, they are concerned with ideas of beauty, pleasure, enjoyment, form, and affect.

Javanese *gamelan* music (Chapter 7) is not featured in concert the way we hear classical music in the West; rather, it is usually performed to accompany dance or theater. *Gamelan* music also accompanies a family's celebration of a birth, wedding, or other event; people are expected to mingle and talk while the music takes place in the background. The music for the Chinese *qin* (Chapter 8) was associated many centuries ago with amateur musicians, scholars for whom music was a pastime, not a profession. It was felt that a *qin* musician need not strive for virtuosity in performance nor learn more than a few pieces of music. The story goes that, nearly two thousand years ago, a young scholar went to visit a renowned older Chinese scholar. On seeing that the elder's *qin*, hanging on the wall of his study, was dilapidated and missing three of its seven strings, the young scholar inquired as to how it might make music. "Ah," replied the older scholar, "the unplayed melodies are the sweetest to contemplate of all."

Contexts for Music

When should music be performed? How often? On what occasions? Again, every music-culture answers these questions about musical surroundings differently (see Figure 1.9).

In the modern world, where context can depend on the mere flip of an on-off switch and a portable mp3 player, it is hard to imagine the days when all music came from face-to-face performances. Our great-grandparents had to sing or play music or hear it from someone nearby; they could not produce it on demand from the disembodied voice of a radio, television, CD player, iPod, or computer. How attentively you would have listened to a singer or a band 125 years ago if you had thought that the performance might be the only time in your life you would hear that music!

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FIGURE 1.9

Gospel singers at a Pentecostal revival in the Southeastern United States. Guitars, banjos, and camp-meeting songs that would be out place in some U.S. churches, such as the one in Figure 1.1, are appropriate in this context.

Even though much of the music around the globe today comes through mass media, people in music-cultures still associate particular musics with particular contexts. Navajo ceremonial music is appropriate in certain ceremonial contexts but not others. As we will see in Chapter 2, these ceremonies have names such as Enemyway and Blessingway, and each has a specific music that must be performed properly for the ceremony to be effective. *Vacación* is a special symbolic composition for the harp that is performed at the start of the Quichuan child's wake, at the late-evening adorning of the corpse, and at the closing of the casket at dawn (Chapter 9). The usual context for blues is a bar, juke joint, dance hall, or blues club (Chapter 4). This is a far cry from the concert halls that provide the context for symphony orchestra performances. For many centuries in India the courts and upper classes supported the classical music that we will consider in Chapter 6. But concerts of classical music in India are more relaxed and informal than those in Europe, where the patronage of the courts and the aristocracy, as well as the Church, traditionally supported classical music. Today in Europe and North America the government, the wealthy classes, and the universities supply this patronage. Classical music in various parts of the world, then, is usually associated with patronage from the elite classes, and it is performed in refined contexts that speak of its supporters' wealth and leisure.

Sometimes governments intervene to support other kinds of music. For example, during the twentieth century the Soviet Union and other Communist states encouraged a certain kind of folk music, or workers' music, thought to inspire solidarity. Typically, under government management what had been a loose and informal village musical aesthetic was transformed into a disciplined, almost mechanized, urban expression of the modern industrial nation-state (see Chapter 5). Folk festivals, supported by Communist governments, showcased this music. In the United States, the last few decades have also witnessed the rise of government-supported folk festivals (Figure 1.10). Here, though, the diversity of

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FIGURE 1.10

Folk festivals in the United States often feature traditional music from ethnic communities. Here Jae Sook Park plays the *komungo*, a six-stringed Korean plucked lute, at the National Folk Festival, Bangor, Maine, 2003.

ethnic musics is celebrated, and the government encourages the most traditional expressions within the music-cultures that are represented. Folk festivals provide an artificial context for traditional music, but the hope is that in a world where young people are powerfully attracted to new, mass-mediated, transnational popular music, folk festivals will encourage this local music in its home context. When nations modernize and traditional ideas and practices become old-fashioned, as for example in present-day China (Chapter 8), various individuals and institutions (schools, clubs, societies) get involved in efforts to preserve and revive traditional music for contemporary life; in doing so, they also transform it (see the section on musical sustainability, later in this chapter).

History of Music

Why is music so different among the world's peoples? What happens to music over time and space? Does it stay the same or change, and why? What did the music of the past sound like? Should music be preserved? What will the music of the future be? Some cultures institutionalize the past in museums and the future in world's fairs; they support specialists who earn their living by talking and writing about music. Other cultures transmit knowledge of music history mainly by word of mouth through the generations. Recordings, films, videotapes, CDs, DVDs, and now the Internet allow us to preserve musical performances much more exactly than our ancestors could—but only when we choose to do so. For example, one ethnomusicologist was making tapes as he learned to sing Native American music. His teacher advised him to erase the tapes and reuse them once he learned his lessons, but he decided to preserve them.

Musical history responds to changes in human cultures. The work songs that facilitated human labor gave way to the whine of machines with the industrial revolution (Chapter 4), but today the hum of the computer provides a background to individual musical composition and arranging as well as listening over the Internet.

European and Asian rural wedding and funeral ceremonies that involved important music making to celebrate these passage rites have become far less elaborate. The Chinese wedding laments discussed in Chapter 8 represent a survival of this tradition, while the wedding music presented in Chapter 5 represents an ongoing revival of music and ceremony that the Polish mountain peoples wish to preserve.

Questions about music history may arise both inside and outside a particular music-culture. Most music-cultures have their own community scholars who are historians or music authorities, formally trained or not, whose curiosity about music leads them to think and talk about music in their own culture, ask questions, and remember or write down answers. In some music-cultures, authority goes along with being a good musician; in others, one need not be a good musician to be a respected historian of music. Such historians usually are curious about music outside their own cultures as well, and they often develop theories to account for musical differences.

The four categories of ideas about music that we have just discussed—music and the belief system, aesthetics, contexts, and history—overlap. Though we separate them here for convenience, we do not want to suggest that music-cultures present a united front in their ideas about music or that a music-culture prescribes a single aesthetic. People within a music-culture often differ in their ideas about music. Ragtime, jazz, rock and roll, and hip-hop were revolutionary when they were introduced in the United States. They met (and still meet) opposition from some within the U.S. music-culture. This opposition is based on aesthetics (the music is thought to be loud and obscene, while some question whether it is music at all) and context (the music's associated lifestyles are thought to involve narcotics, violence, free love, radical politics, and so forth).

When organized divisions exist within a music-culture, we recognize music-subcultures, worlds within worlds of music. In fact, as we have seen, most music-cultures in the modern world can be divided into several subcultures, some opposed to each other: classical versus rock, for example, or (from an earlier era) sacred hymns versus dance music and drinking songs. Many Native American music-cultures in the northeastern United States have a subculture of traditionalists interested in older musics that are marked as Native American, while other subcultures are involved more with the music of the Catholic Church, and yet others with forms of contemporary popular music (rock, jazz, country) that they have adapted to their needs and desires. Sometimes the subcultures overlap: The performance of a hymn in a Minnesota church may involve region (the upper Midwest), ethnicity (German), and religion (Lutheranism)—all bases for musical subcultures. Which musical subcultures do you identify with most strongly? Which do you dislike? Are your preferences based on contexts, aesthetics, the belief system—or a combination of these?

ACTIVITIES INVOLVING MUSIC

People in a music culture do not just have ideas about music, of course; they put those ideas into practice in a variety of activities—everything from making the sounds to putting music up on the Internet, from rehearsing in their rooms alone to playing in a band to managing a concert to making recordings and marketing them. More and more people are becoming active consumers of music, carefully selecting the music they want to experience from the great variety available.

Human activities involving music also include the way people divide, arrange, or rank themselves in relation to music. Musical ideas and performances are unevenly divided among the people in any music-culture. For example, some perform often, others hardly at all. Some musicians perform for a living, while others play for the love of it. People sing different songs and experience music differently because of age and gender. Racial, ethnic, and work groups also sing their own songs, and each group may develop or be assigned its own musical role. All of these differences have to do with the social organization of the music-culture, and they are based on the music-culture's ideas about music. We may ask, "What is it like in a given music-culture to experience music as a teenage girl in a West Coast suburb, a young male urban professional, or a rural grandmother of Swedish ethnic heritage who lives on a farm?"

Sometimes the division of musical behavior resembles the social divisions within the group and reinforces the usual activities of the culture. Until 1997 the Vienna Symphony had no women in its orchestra. Throughout most of the nineteenth century men acted the female roles in *jingju* opera (see Chapter 8) as the Chinese government felt it was improper for men and women to appear onstage together. In many traditional ceremonies throughout the world, men and women congregate in separate areas; some ceremonies center exclusively on men and others on women. On the other hand, music sometimes goes against the broad cultural grain, often at carnival time or at important moments in the life cycle (initiations, weddings, funerals, and so forth). People on the cultural fringe become important when they play music for these occasions. In fact, many music-cultures assign a low social status to musicians but also acknowledge their power and sometimes even see magic in their work. The most important features of music's social organization are status and role: the prestige of the music makers and the different roles assigned to people in the music-culture. In the interview with the Iraqi refugee musician Rahim al-Haj in Chapter 10 we read of the familiar reaction of his father, who disapproves of his son's ambitions to be a musician, a sentiment that resonates with the historical accounts of the tenth century written in his native city, Baghdad. In contrast, Don César Muquinche (Chapter 9) decided to become a hatmaker rather than follow the career of his father, a harpist; but gradually as an adult he took up the harp, chiefly because the public expected him to follow in his father's footsteps—and in responding to the challenge, he discovered his own talent.

Many of the musical situations in this book depend on these basic aspects of social organization. When blues arose early in the twentieth century, most middle-class African Americans associated it with the black underclass and tried to keep their children away from it. Blues musicians were assigned a low social status (Chapter 4). Neither the Argentine tango nor the Trinidadian steelband were considered respectable when they arose. Only after they gained popularity abroad and returned to their home countries did they become respectable to the point of becoming national symbols of music in their respective countries.

Increasingly, ethnomusicologists have turned to the ways in which race, ethnicity, class, gender, region, and identity are embedded in musical activities. When people in a music-culture migrate out of their region, they often use music as a marker of ethnic identity. Throughout North America, ethnic groups perform and sometimes revive music that they consider to be their own, whether Jewish klezmer music, Andean panpipe music, central European polka, Portuguese fado (Figure 1.11), or Peking Opera.

In the twentieth century, the music industry has played an especially important role in various music-cultures. Music is packaged, bought, and sold. How does a song commodity become popular? When is popularity the result of industry hype and when does it come from a groundswell of consumer interest? How do new kinds of music break into the media? Why do certain kinds of music gain (or fall) in popularity? What makes a hit song? Fortunes are gained and lost based on music producers' abilities to predict what will sell—yet most of the music released commercially does not sell. How should a group of musicians deal with the industry? How can they support themselves while remaining true to their musical vision? What constitutes "selling out"? In the last few decades, markets have expanded and musicians from all over the globe now take part. Computer software-assisted music making and the rise of a market on the Internet have empowered consumers to become musicians and have empowered musicians to become producers and marketers. Music has become an enormously important aspect of the global economy. The current struggles over the future of music delivery on the Internet alone involve profits and losses in the billions of dollars.

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FIGURE 1.11

Ana Vinagre of New Bedford, Massachusetts, sings Portuguese fado. National Folk Festival, Bangor, Maine, 2002.

A generation ago, people were taking music out of the hands of the corporations by making and trading concert tapes of jam bands. People put together their own "mixes" of already-made popular songs on cassette tapes for themselves and their friends. Today, with software such as GarageBand, the computer has turned tens of thousands of people into serious amateurs, who make *beats*, or background tracks for hip-hop, and who make and mix all kinds of tracks in their spare time and place their own songs on the Internet. Professionals can be hired to compose and add tracks to a mix, while certain websites such as jamglue encourage other amateurs to do this for free. As more people are participate in music by making it, not just listening to it, the line between professional and amateur is blurring. For many, the primary experience of listening to music as a commodity is giving way to the experience of making music with the computer and bypassing traditional commercial channels.

As a great deal of money remains at stake in the distribution of music—new as well as old, along with "world music" that is packaged and distributed globally, debates rage over who owns music. Should music be treated as private property or should it be regarded as common property for the public good? Or, as copyright

law in the United States once provided, should it be private property for a given number of years, after which time it would become common property and pass into the "public domain"? Here, as elsewhere, ideas about music generate activities involved with music. People in traditional music-cultures often have regarded music as common property, but as outsiders and multinational corporations profit from their music, their concern to protect their musical resources has grown. International agencies such as World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have formulated cultural policy to protect what they call "intangible heritage" or traditional arts from commercial exploitation.

REPERTORIES OF MUSIC

A **repertory** is a stock of music that is ready to be performed. It consists of six basic parts: style, genres, texts, composition, transmission, and movement. Think of a music that you are familiar with and see if you can understand it using the following terms.

Style

Style includes everything related to the organization of musical sound itself: pitch elements (scale, melody, harmony, tuning systems), time elements (rhythm, meter), timbre elements (voice quality, instrumental tone color), and sound intensity (loudness/softness). All depend on a music-culture's aesthetics.

Together, style and aesthetics create a recognizable sound that a group understands as its own. For example, the fiddle was the most popular dance instrument in Europe and North America from about the eighteenth century until the turn of the twentieth century. In many areas it is still popular; in others, such as Ireland, it is undergoing a revival. Old-time fiddlers in Missouri prefer their regional dance and contest tunes to the bluegrass tunes of the upper South. Old-time fiddlers in the upper South, on the other hand, prefer their own repertory of breakdown tunes. People new to these repertories do not hear significant differences between them. Are they alike? Not entirely, because each group can distinguish its own music. People learning fiddle tunes know they are getting somewhere when they can recognize the differences in national and regional styles and put those differences into words—or music.

Genres

Genres are the named, standard units of the repertory, such as "song" and its various subdivisions (for example, lullaby, Christmas carol, wedding song) or the many types of instrumental music and dances (jig, reel, waltz, schottische, polka, *hambo,* and so forth). Genres come with built-in rules or expectations regarding performance style and setting, with the result that the "same" song, dance, or piece can be classified into different genres depending on how, when, or by whom it is performed or played back. An Irish jig might be played as an instrumental tune in a pub session, used in a film score, or danced professionally as part of an international show such as *Riverdance.*

Most music-cultures have a great many genres, but their terms do not always correspond to terms in other music-cultures. Among the Yoruba in the African

nation of Nigeria, for example, powerful kings, chiefs, and nobles retained praise singers to sing to them (Olajubu 1978:685). The praise songs are called *oriki.* Although we can approximate an English name to describe them (praise songs), no equivalent genre exists today in Europe or America. In Japan, the labels identifying popular music include *gunka* (military songs), *fōku songu* (contemporary folk songs, distinguished from *minyō,* or the traditional folk songs of the countryside), *nyū myūshiku* (new music), and *pops.* In North America, blues is one genre, country music another. Subdivisions of country music include rockabilly and bluegrass. If you listen to country music stations on the radio, you will see that some identify themselves as "real country" (along with the latest hits, more of a mix of oldies and southern-oriented country music) and others as "hard country" (more of a mix of rock-oriented country music). Consider electronica and some of its subdivisions; the website allmusic.com lists more than fifty subgenres including techno, house, trance, trip-hop, happy hardcore, goa trance, and ambient. Subgenres have proliferated as composition and marketing have grown more sophisticated. How many subgenres can you name in your favorite kind of music?

Texts

The words (or lyrics) to a song are known as its **text.** Any song with words is an intersection of two very different and profound human communication systems: language and music. A song with words is a temporary weld of these two systems, and for convenience we can look at each by itself.

Every text has its own history; sometimes a single text is associated with several melodies. On the other hand, a single melody can go with various texts. In blues music, for example, texts and melodies lead independent lives, coupling as the singer desires (Chapter 4). *Pop berat* ("heavy pop") compositions fuse Indonesian patriotic texts, traditional Indonesian musical instruments, and electric guitars and synthesizers (see Chapter 7). Navajo ritual song and prayer texts often conclude by saying that beauty and harmony prevail (see Chapter 2).

Composition

How does music enter the repertory of a music-culture? Is music composed individually or by a group? Is it fixed, varied within certain limits, or improvised spontaneously in performance? Improvisation fascinates most ethnomusicologists: Chapters 3, 4, and 6 consider improvisation in African, African American, and South Indian music. Perhaps at some deep level we prize improvisation not just because of the skills involved but because we think it exemplifies human freedom.

The composition of music, whether planned or spontaneous, is bound up with social organization. Does the music-culture have a special class of composers, or can anyone compose music? Composition is related as well to ideas about music: Some music-cultures divide songs into those composed by people and those "given" to people from deities, animals, and other nonhuman composers.

Transmission

How is music learned and transmitted from one person to the next, from one generation to the next? Does the music-culture rely on formal instruction, as in

FIGURE 1.12

Family photo of a father and son playing music at home, on violin and piccolo, c. 1910. Photographer and place unknown.

South India (Chapter 6)? Or is music learned chiefly through imitation (Chapter 4)? Does music theory underlie the process of formal instruction? Does music change over time? How and why? Is there a system of musical notation? Cipher (number) notation in Indonesia did not appear until the twentieth century (Chapter 7). In the ancient musical notation for the *qin* (Chapter 8), the Chinese writing indicates more than what note is to be played, because many of the Chinese pictograms (picture writing) suggest something in nature. For example, the notation may suggest a duck landing on water, telling the player to imitate the duck's landing with the finger when touching the string. Such notation can also evoke the feeling intended by the composer.

Some music-cultures transmit music through apprenticeships lasting a lifetime (as in the disciple's relation to a guru, Chapter 6). The instructor becomes like a parent, teaching values and ethics as well as music. In these situations, music truly becomes a way of life and the apprentice is devoted to the music and the teacher. Other music-cultures have no formal instruction, and the aspiring musician learns by watching and listening, often over many years. In these circumstances, growing up in a musical family is helpful (Figure 1.12). When a repertory is transmitted chiefly by example and imitation rather than notation, we say the music exists in *oral tradition* rather than written. Blues (Chapter 4) is an example of music in oral tradition; so is the *sanjuán* dance genre of highland Ecuadorian Quichua (Chapter 9). Music in oral tradition varies more over time and space than does music tied to a printed musical score. Sometimes the same music exists both in oral and written traditions. At gatherings called singing conventions, people belonging to Primitive Baptist denominations in the upper South sing hymn tunes from notation in tune books such as *The Sacred Harp.* Variants of these hymn tunes also exist in oral tradition among the Old Regular Baptists (see Figure 1.1), who do not use musical notation but who rely instead on learning the tunes from their elders and remembering them.

Movement

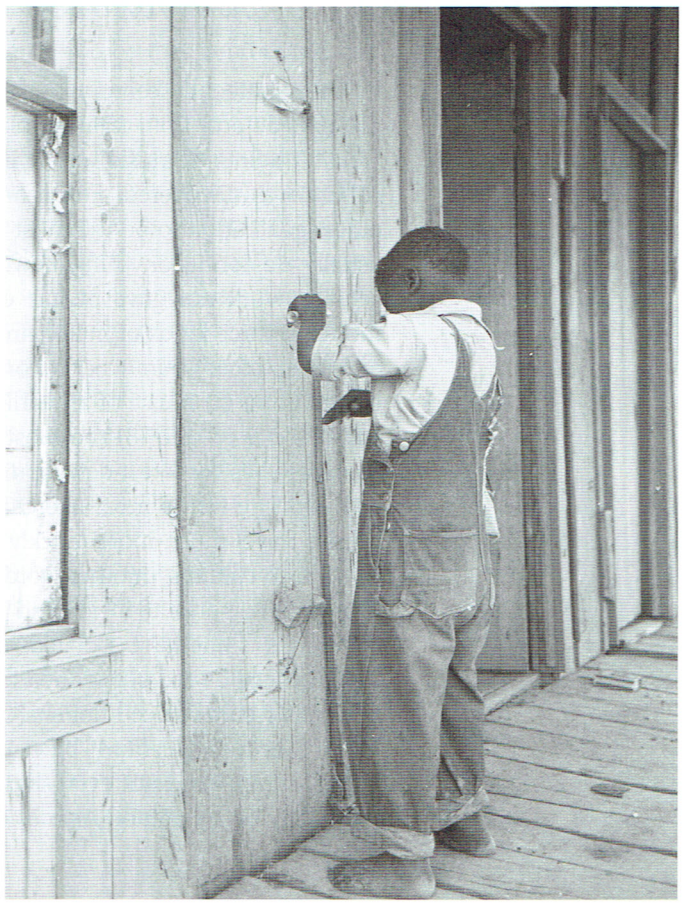
A whole range of physical activity accompanies music. Playing a musical instrument, alone or in a group, not only creates sound but also literally moves people—that is, they sway, dance, walk, work in response. Even if we cannot see them move very much, their brains and bodies are responding as they hear and process the music. How odd it would be for a rock band to perform without moving in response to their music, in ways that let the audience know they were feeling it. This was demonstrated many years ago by the new-wave rock band Devo when its members acted like robots. In one way or another movement and music connect in

the repertory of every culture. Sometimes the movement is quite loose, suggesting freedom and abandon, and at other times, as in Balinese dance, it is highly controlled, suggesting that in this culture controlling oneself is beautiful and admirable.

MATERIAL CULTURE OF MUSIC

Material culture refers to the material objects that people in a culture produce—objects that can be seen, held, felt, and used. This book is an example of material culture. So are dinner plates, gravestones, airplanes, hamburgers, cell phones, and school buildings. Examining a culture's tools and technology can tell us about the group's history and way of life. Similarly, research into the material culture of music can help us to understand music-cultures. The most important objects in a music-culture, of course, are musical instruments (see Figure 1.13). We cannot hear the actual sound of any musical performances before the 1870s, when the phonograph was invented, so we rely on instruments for information about music-cultures in the remote past. Here we have two kinds of evidence: instruments preserved more or less intact, such as Sumerian harps over forty-five hundred years old, or the Chinese relics from the tomb of Marquis Yi (see Chapter 8) and instruments pictured in art. Through the study of instruments, as well as paintings, written documents, and other sources, we can explore the movement of music from the Near East to China over a thousand years ago, we can trace the Guatemalan marimba to its African roots, or we can outline the spread of Near Eastern musical influences to Europe. The influence of Near Eastern music on Europe occurred mainly before the Spanish inquisition of 1515, through exchange between a multicultural and multireligious population in Andalusia, the region of southern Europe that we now know as Spain and Portugal; this resulted in the development of most of the instruments in the Euro-American symphony orchestra.

We can also ask questions of today's music-cultures: Who makes instruments, and how are they distributed? What is the relation between instrument makers and musicians? How do this generation's musical instruments reflect its musical tastes and styles, compared with those of the previous generation? In the late 1940s and early 1950s, electric instruments transformed the sound of popular music in the United States, and in the 1960s this electronic musical revolution spread elsewhere in the world. Taken for granted today, electric instruments—guitars, basses, pianos, pedal steel guitars—ushered in a musical revolution. The computer is the most revolutionary musical instrument



Russell Lee. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

FIGURE 1.13

Young man playing a one-stringed diddly-bow. Missouri. 1938. (Instructions for making and playing a similar instrument are given in Chapter 4.)

today. Computer-assisted composition, incorporating sound sampling and other innovations, empowers a new generation of composers to do things they had otherwise been unable to accomplish.

Musical scores, instruction books, sheet music, instructional DVDs, websites devoted to music—these too are part of the material culture. Scholars once defined folk music-cultures as those in which people learn to sing music by ear rather than from print, but research shows mutual influence among oral and written sources during the past few centuries in Europe and America. Because they tend to standardize songs, printed versions limit variety, but paradoxically they stimulate people to create original songs. Also, the ability to read music notation has a far-reaching effect on musicians and, when it becomes widespread, on a music-culture as a whole.

One more important part of a music's material culture should be singled out: the impact of electronic media. This technology has facilitated the information revolution, a twentieth-century phenomenon as important as the industrial revolution was in the nineteenth. Electronic media have affected music-cultures all over the world. People listen to mass-mediated music more than any other kind. Such media are one of the main reasons many now call our planet a global village.

Ecological and Sustainable Worlds of Music

In the eighteenth century, when Europeans began collecting music from the countryside and from faraway places outside their homelands, they thought that "real," traditional music was dying out. From then on, each time a new music-culture was discovered, European and American collectors took the music of its oldest generation to be the most authentic, conferring on it a timeless quality and usually deploring anything new. This neither reflected the way music-cultures actually work nor gave people enough credit for creative choice. At any given moment, three kinds of music circulate within most communities: (1) music so old and accepted as "ours" that no one questions (or sometimes even knows) where it comes from, (2) music of an earlier generation understood to be old-fashioned or perhaps classic, and (3) the most recent or current types of music, marketed and recognized as the latest development. These recent musics may be local, imported, or both. The last is most likely, because today the world is linked electronically; musics travel much more quickly than they did a hundred years ago.

Music-cultures, in other words, are dynamic rather than static. They constantly change in response to inside and outside pressures. It is wrong to think of a music-culture as something isolated, stable, smoothly operating, impenetrable, and uninfluenced by the outside world. Indeed, as we will see in Chapter 4, the people in a music-culture need not share the same language, nationality, or ethnic origin. In the twenty-first century, blues is popular with performers worldwide. People in a music-culture need not even share all of the same ideas about music—as we have seen, they in fact do not. As music-cultures change (and they are always changing)