

# **The Study of Ethnomusicology**

## **Thirty-Three Discussions**

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## A Harmless Drudge

### *Reaching for the Dictionary*

#### Definitions

I think it was in September 2013 that the field of ethnomusicology may have finally arrived in polite society; the term appeared in a *New York Times* crossword puzzle, with the clue "Prefix to musicology." Sixty years earlier, when I was a brand-new college teacher and began using the word to describe what I did, it was met with expressions of wonder. But soon people were able to respond with terms such as "folk music" and "primitive music," and "ancient music and instruments" soon entered the conversation. By 1960 the follow-up question might have often been "Oh, do you play in a gamelan?" or "Have you heard of the didgeridoo?" In the 1970s, the conversation might well include the term "ethnic" music or even the etymologically outrageous "ethnomusic"; and in the eighties and nineties, free association might lead to "diversity" and "world music" and "indigenous music" (no one said "primitive" anymore). In the twenty-first century, one hears about theoretical frameworks, about Orientalism, about ethics, diasporas, international hip-hop. The free associations that "ethnomusicology" calls up have changed, and by and large the word is no longer the puzzler it was in 1950. But if the term is broadly accepted in the academy, elsewhere we're not yet out of the woods. Only recently, when I told my faithful physician that I taught a specialized field called ethnomusicology, he said, a bit condescendingly, "Oh, there must be as many as three or four of you." Yet ethnomusicology has widely affected a number of academic disciplines, it has greatly influenced the world of performers and audiences, and it has had a significant impact on the world's listening habits.

In the 130 years in which what is now called ethnomusicology may be said to have existed, beginning with pioneer works such as those of Alexander J. Ellis

(1885), Theodore Baker (1882), and Carl Stumpf (1886), attitudes and orientations have changed greatly. And so also has the name, from something very briefly called *Musikologie* (in the 1880s; see Adler 1885), to “comparative musicology” (through about 1950, though also first used by Adler 1885), then to “ethno-musicology” (1950–ca. 1956), quickly to “ethnomusicology” (removing the hyphen, by the Society for Ethnomusicology, actually was an ideological move in the campaign for disciplinary independence), with later suggestions such as “cultural musicology” (Kerman 1985), “socio-musicology” (Feld 1984), and a perhaps doubt-inspired “(ethno)musicology” (Stobart 2008) occasionally thrown in. The changes in name accompanied changes in intellectual directions and emphases.

It is difficult to find a single simple definition to which most people in this field would subscribe, and maybe this is the reason ethnomusicologists were for many years excessively concerned with defining themselves. Alan P. Merriam, the scholar in the history of ethnomusicology most concerned with definition and the associated problems of basic orientation, cited repeatedly the need for ethnomusicologists to look carefully at what they had done, and wished to do, in order to move in concerted fashion toward their goals (Merriam 1960; 1964, 3–36; 1969b; 1975). In a major essay discussing the history of definitions, Merriam (1977a) brought together a large number of disparate statements defining the limits, the major thrust, the practicality, and the ideology of ethnomusicology; his list was later supplemented by Simon (1978), Myers (1992, 3, 7–9), and others. Interestingly, definitions are harder to come by in recent publications. Major theoretical statements such as those of Rice (2003, 2010), Stobart (2008), or Solis (2012) don’t come right out with any. In one of the most recent discussions of the field, Rice starts out with one that strikes me as both too general and too specific: “Ethnomusicology is the study of why, and how, human beings are musical” (2014a, 1), but then (9–10) lists more than a dozen others, all of which he seems to accept as useful. Perhaps this definitional uncertainty has been a good thing, contributing to the elasticity of ethnomusicology’s interests and the flexibility of its boundaries. Perhaps we need to remember the fable of the blind men and the elephant.

There are various types of definitions: Some tell what each ethnomusicologist must do or be in order to merit the title, and some synthesize what the entire group does. Others focus on what kinds of research have been done, or what should have been done instead, or what must eventually be done. Some definitions contemplate a body of data to be gathered and studied, or activities to be undertaken by typical scholars, or again the questions to which raw data may lead. Some seek to broaden limits, and to include within the scope of ethnomusicology all sorts of issues also claimed by other fields or disciplines, while

others envision narrow specialization. A scholar trying to find order among all of these definitions (Merriam cites more than forty, but he stopped in 1976) would surely become what Samuel Johnson called (referring to himself, the lexicographer) a “harmless drudge.” It’s not, lest you’ve been misinterpreting the title of this chapter, the ethnomusicologists who deserve that title; it’s me.

What now, specifically, are some of these definitions, and how can one group them? In their briefest form, without elaboration or commentary:

People who seek—or sought—to define ethnomusicology by the material that it contemplates have opted for one of these alternatives: it is the study of (1) folk music and music that used to be called “primitive,” that is, tribal, indigenous, or possibly ancient music; (2) non-Western and folk music; (3) all music outside the investigator’s own culture; (4) all music that lives in oral tradition; (5) all music of a given locality, as in “the ethnomusicology of Tokyo”; (6) the music that given population groups regard as their particular property—for example, “black” music of the United States; (7) all contemporary music (Chase 1958); (8) all human music; and (9) everything produced in culture or nature that could conceivably be called music.

Those who focus on the typical activities of ethnomusicologists might choose among the following: (1) comparative study of musical systems and cultures (a basically musicological activity); (2) comprehensive analysis of the musical culture of one society (essentially anthropological); (3) the study of musics as systems, perhaps systems of signs (an activity related to linguistics or semiotics); (4) the study of music in or as culture, or perhaps music in its cultural context, with techniques derived from anthropology (often called “anthropology of music”); and (5) historical study of musics outside the realm of Western classical music (using approaches of historians, area studies specialists, and folklorists).

Those definitions that focus on ultimate goals might include the following: (1) the search for musical universals, (2) the descriptions of the pattern of sound produced by a society (as discussed in Blacking 1969), and (3) a field whose practice will benefit humanity (see Titon 1992 and Averill 2003).

This sampling provides an idea of the number and variety of definitions and approaches. Beyond this, however, the disciplinary identity of ethnomusicology is often the subject of debate. Opinions: Ethnomusicology is (1) a full-fledged discipline; (2) a branch of musicology or (3) of anthropology; (4) an interdisciplinary field, or an “interdiscipline” (Solis 2012); (5) the kind of all-encompassing discipline that “musicology” ought to be, but is still trying to become (see various publications by C. Seeger as well as Stobart 2008).

One might also define a field of research by the kinds of things about which its people argue and debate. In a sense, this series of essays is itself an attempt to

define ethnomusicology in terms of some of its abiding issues, concepts, questions, and problem areas of general concern. Conciseness continues to elude us: *Wikipedia* tells us ethnomusicology is “an academic field encompassing various approaches to the study of music (broadly defined) that emphasize its cultural, social, material, cognitive, biological, and other dimensions or contexts instead of or in addition to its isolated sound component or any particular repertoire.” The Society for Ethnomusicology, on its website, uses what strikes me as an excessively narrow definition: “Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context. Ethnomusicologists approach music as a social process in order to understand not only *what* music is but *why* it is: what music means to its practitioners and audiences, and how those meanings are conveyed.”

Some scholars have tried to find an elegant way of putting all of the aims of the field into one sentence. Thus, Merriam (in my composite formulation): the study of music in culture, as concept, behavior, and sound. Blacking: “the study of the different musical systems of the world” (1973, 3). Timothy Rice (1987) reduced a longer and less elegant sentence into the simple “How do humans make music?” My personal definition? Ethnomusicology is the study of all of the world’s musics from a comparative perspective, and it is also the anthropological study of music. But don’t construe this narrowly. As the reader will see in the ensuing essay, I have tried to get away from this two-pronged approach, but I haven’t quite managed it.

### Whence This Strange Word?

It began to be widely used shortly after 1953. Before that, the field was “comparative musicology,” and Merriam (1977a, 192–93) believed that the terminological change came from the recognition that this field is no more comparative than others, that comparison can be made only after the things to be compared are well understood in themselves, and that, in the end, comparison across cultural boundaries might be impossible because the musics and cultures of the world are unique. In *The Anthropology of Music* (1964, 52–53), he also pointed out that most of the general publications of ethnomusicology did not deal with methods and techniques of comparative study. This was perhaps true at the time (Wiora 1975, A. Schneider 2006, and many essays in the *Garland Encyclopedia* from ca. 2000 are counterexamples, but they came later), but I would argue that it is difficult to find specialized studies that do not in some way, at least by implication, make use of intercultural comparison as a way of gaining and presenting insights.

But if we debate what caused the term to be adopted so quickly, we’re also not sure just where it came from. Jaap Kunst is generally regarded as the first

to have used the new term prominently in print (1950, 7). He did so, he says, because comparative musicology is not *especially* comparative. Most general works (for example, Myers 1992, 3) accept him as the inventor of the term.

But there are alternate possibilities. If I may insert a personal recollection, I first heard the term used by Merriam in 1952, and I have the feeling that he, and his associates in the Department of Anthropology at Northwestern University, might not have known Kunst's book. The participation of a number of anthropologists in the American leadership of comparative musicology seems likely to have favored the use of a term paralleling the names of several anthropological subfields: ethnolinguistics, ethnobotany, and ethnohistory, with others, such as ethnoscience, coming later. Then, scholars coming from music, seeing the term used by Kunst and by anthropologists, would have quickly joined in. Among the academic disciplines around 1950, anthropology had greater prestige than did musicology, itself often misunderstood even in midcentury. Musicologists, after all, were seen as academic Simon Legrees for students by students of musical performance, and musicological study was frequently regarded as the refuge of the unsuccessful player or composer. Nationalism too may have played a part. Americans were proud of their significant contributions to non-Western and folk music research between 1930 and about 1955, in comparison to their more modest work as historians of Western music. They might have wished for a term that expressed their special role, a term that was not simply a translation of the established German term *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*. The fact that one was dealing with a special kind of music, low in the hierarchy of musics with which the conventional musicologist dealt, may also have stimulated the need for a special term, a whole word, "ethnomusicology," instead of a term merely designating a subfield of musicology that dealt, by implication, with "submusics" worthy only of being compared invidiously with the great art music of Europe.

But a further strand of the history of our word comes from the writing of the Ukrainian scholar Bohdan Lukaniuk (2010), who traces the word to the writings of his compatriot, the folklorist and collector Klement Kvitka, who coined it in 1928 (as *etnomusikologia*). Lukaniuk believes that the term was adopted by Mieczysław Kolinski (a Polish scholar who, due to the calamities of World War II, moved to Germany, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, the United States, and eventually Canada, and whom we will meet later in other contexts) and that Kolinski introduced it to Kunst. This makes good sense, but I don't remember Kolinski or Kunst ever mentioning Kvitka. My belief is that the term was actually coined—"invented," if you will—three times, but that it was so obviously available that almost anyone could have come up with it, at least by 1950. But there is little doubt that Kvitka was the first to use the word (or its Ukrainian equivalent).

## Becoming an Ethnomusicologist

There may be many definitions of ethnomusicology, but those who call themselves ethnomusicologists or who otherwise associate themselves with this field are actually a relatively compact group. So, who are they? In 2008 the Society for Ethnomusicology conducted a survey that suggests that, professionally, their primary loyalty seems to be to the field of music, rather than to the social sciences. Some 80 percent of the teachers among them are in music departments. Admittedly, this survey applies largely to North America. Descriptions of the ethnomusicological population between around 1950 and 1980 may be found in Hood (1971) and Myers (1992). Let me try an impressionistic overview of the present, based on my experience largely, though not exclusively, in North America. Of those working in this field since about 1980, many have an initial background in academic music, as students of performance, theory, or composition. But increasingly, they have also come from backgrounds in popular music, and some are motivated by prolonged residence—perhaps as teenagers—abroad. A good many also come to this field from exposure to the wider world, perhaps as members of the Peace Corps, or as teachers of English abroad, or in missionary work, or through contact with—or membership in—minorities of many kinds. Typically, they seem to have been turned on to the field by the love of or fascination with a particular music and then become exposed to it intensively, perhaps learning to perform it, going on to the formal study of anthropology, or of a field of area studies such as South Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. Some turn to ethnomusicology after a period of living in a non-Western culture as teachers of Western music. Many students of ethnomusicology very quickly form a specialized allegiance to the music of a particular culture or area, and even a particular genre of music—Plains Indian powwow dances, Javanese gamelan, North Indian classical music, Algerian *rai*, popular music at home such as rap. In the United States, popular music has become a field of enormous interest. It is my impression that in western Europe and Australia, somewhat similar conditions obtain, but that in Asian and African nations students are most typically attracted by indigenous musics. Some ethnomusicologists started out as competent performers of the music they eventually wish to study academically—Patricia Sandler, originally a competent mbira player, undertook Ph.D. research in Afro-Brazilian music. Mei Han, a virtuoso performer on the *zheng*, received a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology after a successful performing career.

Most ethnomusicologists, in any event, undertake graduate study in this field; there aren't many (though there once were) scholars already established in other disciplines—music history, anthropology—who, in midcareer, switched lanes and moved to ethnomusicology. Graduate curricula in ethnomusicology

vary considerably. Some of the leading ones are free-standing programs in their universities, many are attached to music departments and may be considered one of a number of specializations within musicology, and a few are in anthropology, popular culture, media studies, and folklore departments or programs. But while the orientations of these programs in North America varied greatly when they first came into existence in the 1950s and 1960s, and they still differ considerably, there has gradually developed a kind of mainstream, a central core of preparation, that includes some study of performance of the music in which one plans to undertake research—and perhaps incidentally also performance of other noncanonical musics that may be available—and considerable reading and study of anthropology and of anthropologically related theory.

What happens next is not as predictable as it once as. However, near the end of one's graduate study, one ordinarily undertakes field research in a society or culture or subculture. This dissertation fieldwork, preceded by cultural and linguistic preparation, usually involves a year or more of residence in the field venue. Analysis of collected data used to include automatically the transcription of recordings into musical notation, and this is still important, though the arsenal of techniques has been widened. Arriving at musical insights, and—more difficult—developing a procedure for the analysis of human activities and attitudes revolving around the musical sounds, should follow, and the final stage in this research process is the interpretation of data.

Most ethnomusicologists, Ph.D. in hand, seek teaching positions in higher education, though other kinds of work—librarianship, archival activities, museums, the recording industry, journalism, public service of various sorts, publishing, and professional performance—are increasingly making use of ethnomusicological expertise. Ethnomusicologists appointed to teaching positions are typically assigned a course in “musics of the world,” or at least something going far beyond the scope of their specialized research, along with something more in their particular line of expertise. Advanced courses may be devoted to geographical areas, or they may be topical (for example, world perspectives on children's music, improvised music around the world, or the study of musical change on a global basis).

Interestingly, it seems that in middle age, many ethnomusicologists add a second world area to their fields of expertise. For myself, I started with Native American music and, at the age of thirty-nine, added the classical music of Iran. Among my colleagues, Thomas Turino, first an Andeanist, added the music of East Africa and, further, American vernacular musics, and Charles Capwell added Indonesia to South Asia. Paul Berliner, an authority on East African mbira music, became, as well, an authority on jazz. I wish I could assert that elderly ethnomusicologists become wiser and more inclined to take broad and long views of the world of music, but I'm not so sure.



## What They Actually Do

A typical ethnomusicologist's profile? Despite all diversity, a good many of my colleagues will recognize themselves here. As for the definitions cited above, there may be a lot of them, but ethnomusicologists really aren't all that different from each other. There is often a gap between what ethnomusicologists do and what, by their own definition, they claim or hope to do.

There will be a lot more on this subject in the ensuing chapters. By way of introduction, however: What most ethnomusicologists actually do is to carry out research about non-Western, folk, popular, and vernacular music and to teach about these subjects. Popular music, once a kind of outlier, has come to occupy the largest portion of our research program. In all this, we take into account both the music itself, as sound, and how it interacts with other things that people do—that's really what we mean by "music in culture." However we define these terms, they are what the majority of authors in such journals as *Ethnomusicology*, *World of Music*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, and *Asian Music* actually write about. The layman's definition of ethnomusicology as the study of non-Western and folk music, although widely criticized, is descriptively correct. On the other hand, another lay definition of the field, as the study of music outside one's own culture, is far less valid than it used to be and by the time of this writing verges on being irrelevant. Scholars from most nations who call themselves ethnomusicologists typically do study music in their own nation. See chapters 14 and 15 for what "own" may mean, especially for African and Asian scholars, who, when they study the European music that is outside their own culture, often prefer to call themselves music historians or just musicologists.

Ethnomusicologists are supremely interested in music as a component of culture. For some time—perhaps the period between 1950 and 1970 is the most indicative—they tended to divide themselves into two groups, frequently at odds, one concentrating on the music "itself," the other on the cultural context. The first typically felt that they were properly studying the main point of focus, the music itself, in its cultural context, looking down on these other "contextualists" as amateurs unable to deal directly with music, while the others, espousing an anthropological approach, considered their opposite numbers to be naive, unable even to understand the musical artifact because they could not approach it as a product of culture and unwilling to deal with musical concepts, attitudes, or forms of behavior other than the piece of music itself. After about 1980, the two groups tended to merge, but even in earlier times I do not know of any ethnomusicologists who did not, in their total commitments, have a major interest in music as an aspect of human culture. Anthropologists, as a basic technique of their profession, know how to analyze the interaction of various domains in culture; musicologists

are distinguished by their fundamental ability to make sophisticated analyses of musical artifacts. Most ethnomusicologists try to do both.

Most ethnomusicologists become involved with the music they study as performers; sometimes study of performance leads to academic study, and sometimes going into the field with anthropological purposes leads to study of instruments and singing. Although scholars before 1950 would rarely undertake trying to play the music they were collecting or analyzing, by 2010 the vast majority of ethnomusicologists had to some degree become performers—often quite or even very competent, often just at the level of students—and they used these skills in teaching (see discussion in Solís 2004). Indeed, a very large number of college teachers in this field are expected to develop ensembles consisting of American (and other) students at their schools, for both study and public performance of non-Western and other noncanonical musics; at my school, for example, there was a Balinese gamelan, an African mbira ensemble, an Andean panpipe group, and an orchestra performing Balkan and Middle Eastern repertory. Let me leave to later (chapters 11, 14, 15) further discussion of the role of this approach in fieldwork, in preservation, and in education, its values and possible drawbacks.

Although most academic ethnomusicologists in North America are based in music schools and departments (80 percent, according to the 2008 survey of the Society for Ethnomusicology mentioned earlier), a large proportion of the intellectual leaders in the field have come, and continue to come, from anthropology. But, as the following chapters examine principal issues that ethnomusicologists confront, it will become evident that this is a field that frequently asks questions that are actually fundamental to musicology, the discipline that encompasses all kinds of music scholarship. Of course, many scholars concerned with music quite justly see themselves not as musicologists at all, but rather as anthropologists, folklorists, sociologists, linguists, historians, culture theorists, and critics; yet, when engaging in ethnomusicological work, they are contributing to this central core of musicological activity (see the essays in Blum 1987 and Cook and Everist 1999). To be sure, they are at the same time making contributions to their home disciplines, such as anthropology and folklore, but typically their findings are not as central to these fields as they are to musicology. It's a fact that in North America, music departments welcome the anthropological approach to music brought by ethnomusicologists as a way of rounding out their students' perspectives, while anthropology departments have been less frequently inclined to broaden their perspective of culture to serious inclusion of the arts. Ethnomusicology may function well as an independent field, and surely it has multiple disciplinary associations, but I strongly believe that ethnomusicological findings, insights, and theories, no matter whatever other disciplines they may also contribute to, have made their greatest contributions to musicology. Anyway, to make clear my own

position, I consider myself a musicologist who specializes in ethnomusicology and who is obliged also to know something about anthropology (and some other fields), but in the end primarily a kind of musicologist.

The first generations of ethnomusicologists, from around 1900 to maybe 1970, were seen as academic oddballs involved in an arcane subject of no interest outside the academy (or even inside). After 1960 they began to make their musics known by issuing records and promoting concerts (of, say, Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Middle Eastern, and West African musics), and through their interest in performing the music they study as researchers, they have added greatly to musical life in their communities. I would assert that they played a role in the rapidly increasing interchanges of musics that led to the styles and the culture of "world music" as a category in the listening habits of Western society. So now, though few outsiders actually know exactly what it is that *ethnomusicologists* do in their lives, *ethnomusicology* is a concept and a term that has gradually become known at all levels of education, in the mass media, and in certain areas of government. The world of music has changed incredibly since the 1980s, and ethnomusicologists are recognized as having contributed to these changes, and they are sometimes sought as interpreters of what has happened. Their work has contributed significantly to what is now taught in public school music programs, to the variety of musics available on recordings to all, and to the resources used by composers of concert music.

As I said earlier, given the great importance of anthropological thinking in the life of ethnomusicology, I would nevertheless maintain that it is more to be seen as one of the musical disciplines than as one of those involving the study of culture. It should count most as a kind of musicology, and it is actually not all that easily separated conceptually from historical musicology, from the people who unfairly claim exclusive right to the label of "musicologists." For one thing, virtually all music historians deal in some respects with music as sound as well as with music in culture. And all dictionary definitions of musicology include work that ethnomusicologists do.

One way in which ethnomusicologists, whether from musical or anthropological backgrounds and perspectives, distinguish themselves from other kinds of specifically musical scholarship in what they actually do (see Reyes 2009 for a critical view) is their emphasis on the centrality of fieldwork. It wasn't always so. We began in the nineteenth century with a tendency to speculate on the basis of little supporting evidence, moving around 1900 to "armchair" research, in which the ethnomusicologist analyzed materials collected and recorded in the field by others—usually anthropologists and missionaries. But as the twentieth century progressed, fieldwork became increasingly essential and, after World War II, a *sine qua non* of the ethnomusicologist's own style of life and study. Of course, face-to-face investigation of exotic music and musicians was known

earlier, and even in the “armchair” period most ethnomusicologists did venture into the “field” or at least recognized the desirability of doing so.

Today it is taken for granted that each ethnomusicologist must have *some* field research experience and that most studies are based on the researcher’s own fieldwork. But considering economic and political developments since 1980, the difficulty of doing research in many parts of the world, and the fact that the world’s societies produce recordings and publications of their own, it is possible that in the future, the armchair will become part of our furniture. Certainly, the twenty-first-century developments in technology make a person’s physical location less of an issue. Actually, a number of scholars have carried out research on electronic media such as YouTube and on films and television programs, data gathering that they were able to carry out in their homes. Thus, conventional fieldwork may no longer be a hallmark of ethnomusicology.

The kind and quality of fieldwork on which research is based have a profound effect on the conclusions, and fieldwork also has broader significance as the ethnomusicologist’s bridge to the cultural “other” (which includes distant lands as well as societies close to home). It’s a truism: exposure to another culture stimulates empathy with both the uniqueness and also the common humanity of another society of people and provides insight into the complexity of the music and musical life in what may from a distance seem a simple situation. We believe that this understanding, once it has been gained in a particular culture, will carry over to further work not based on field research, that it will help to evaluate publications by others that may be based on fieldwork and furnish insights necessary for guiding the fieldwork of students who investigate societies with which the teacher is not directly acquainted. All of this is, of course, tied to the fact that most ethnomusicologists study (or used to) cultures outside their own and to the resulting assumption that there is a dichotomy between one’s own culture and all others, the latter in a certain sense all alike. This position has been widely critiqued in recent literature (going back to positions of philosopher Antonio Gramsci [1971] and summarized by Slobin [1992a]; see chapters 15 and 29 here). Epistemologically, our approach to foreign cultures initially lumps them into a single category; we begin by dividing the world into classes of “ours” and “not ours,” into “familiar” and “strange.” Later, both in the history of our field and in our personal careers, we try to overcome this simplistic view.

## Various Kinds of Layout

Let me, in this essay concerning basic definitions, look at one more issue: the way in which ethnomusicology as a field is viewed by its adherents. I want to do this by looking briefly at the way some works that lay out the field are orga-

nized. A lecture of Hornbostel's given in 1905, perhaps qualifying as the earliest attempt, asks about the origin of music, the nature of musical beauty, and the need to find ways of studying the world's diverse musics and preserving them. Curt Sachs (1930) looks less at methods and approaches but more at results, seen systematically, providing short chapters on such diverse issues as origins of music, instruments, the musicians, melody types, physiology, magic, labor, and historical reconstruction, using the perspective of a musicologist. Bose (1953), who had worked as Hornbostel's assistant, devotes one chapter to "humans and music" and four to a survey of categories such as tone colors, melody and rhythm, and tonality. In 1964 Merriam's *Anthropology of Music* provided the first synthesis, setting the study of music in culture as the organizational matrix, using categories such as social behavior, learning, composition, uses and functions, aesthetics, and the interrelationship of the arts. Merriam's work surveyed approaches and provided examples from many societies. My own work of the same year (Nettl 1964)—Merriam and I did not know about each other's projects before they were published—follows an ethnomusicologist through a set of activities beginning with fieldwork and ending with theoretical conclusions, but with most of the emphasis on direct studies of music and little on music in culture. A few years later, Mantle Hood (1971) provided a text that discusses the study of performances (in field and classroom), transcription, organology, field methods with a lot of attention to technology of the time, and a chapter on "scientific methods and the laboratory." My own idiosyncratic attempt of 1983, predecessor of the present one, was influenced by all of these works and, organizationally, probably looks like a combination of them all.

The largest treatment of the field is composed of two volumes edited by Helen Myers (1992, 1993). The first one surveys, in extended essays by a number of scholars, the principal activities of an ethnomusicologist—fieldwork, ethnography, transcription, analysis, as well as some other categories of concern (biology, dance, organology, ethics, preservation)—and offers a survey of recent directions. The second volume provides information and discussion about ethnomusicology in each of a large number of nations, by many authors who speak from varying perspectives and with varying degrees of success. Ruth Stone in *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (2008) surveys perspectives and theoretical contributions, largely using theories from other disciplines as points of departure, including cultural evolutionism and diffusionism, Marxist explanations, structural-functional approaches, paradigmatic structuralism, performance theory, phenomenology, historical research, and more. A shorter work by Arom and Alvarez-Péreyre (2007) includes three sections: a wide-ranging survey of ethnomusicology as an intellectual field, including its history seen as the development of regional schools—the Berlin, the American, and the East European; a survey of methods emphasizing analytical and classificatory issues;

and a long discussion about the relationship of ethnomusicology and general musicology and what the two can learn from each other. In *The Music of the Other*, Aubert (2007) looks at what ethnomusicologists do from the perspective of recent developments in the world's music and musical life, and he contemplates what good ethnomusicologists may do in the world. Let me mention also a work by Anthony Seeger (2006), who looks at it as a group of intellectual lineages and schools of thought and suggests alternative histories—such as the role of composers, or women, or recordists, of the effects of power, regulation, technology—that can provide a way of looking at the totality of this field. Most recently, a succinct survey for the general reader (in 120 very short pages) of history and approaches is provided by Rice (2014a).

Interestingly, the century's worth of surveys I've mentioned do not take as their points of departure certain traditional categories of music, such as "folk" and "art" or indigenous (formerly "primitive"). It's ironic, then, to realize that the person often credited with establishing ethnomusicology as a discipline (changing it in name and character from "comparative musicology"), Jaap Kunst, may be the only one to formally distinguish along those lines. In his definition, ethnomusicology "investigates all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-Western art music. . . . Western art and popular (entertainment) music do not belong to its field" (1959, 1).

Looking at these surveys as a kind of history of the field, it seems to me that the study of music itself has been present all along, and continues to be emphasized, but the study of music in culture becomes increasingly important and now seems to be the dominant motif. The increase in attention to the relationship of the scholar to the rest of the world—to informants or teachers, to other disciplines, to such matters such as ownership and control of music, issues of social justice, and music education—is where it seems the syntheses of our field have changed.

But a final addendum to this survey of surveys: for a field with a small population of authors and readers, we have produced a large number of works that attempt to encompass the field, that talk about what we all do, believe, and think. Just as we have argued for decades about a definition of field and term, we have wanted to examine and explain and lay out the activities of the field. I dare say that historical musicologists have not felt this need to the same extent. Nor, my colleagues in visual art tell me, have art historians, and even an enormously diverse field such as anthropology has not produced a proportionately large body of surveys of theories and methods. Ethnomusicologists seem to have felt the need to explain themselves to the academic world—as I am doing here—but also, while working, studying, researching, constantly to look back to see what they have done. They have been trying, I have the feeling, to prove to themselves and to the world that it has all been worthwhile. Well, I believe it has.

## A Credo?

I've tried to go at the issue of defining ethnomusicology by talking about the multiplicity of definitions, the different ways of defining a discipline, the history of the term "ethnomusicology," the principal activities of ethnomusicologists, the kinds of people who eventually find themselves in this field, and the ways some authors have organized surveys of the field. A final way of defining a field might be by the things that its professionals believe. Is there an ethnomusicologist's creed? Like the Hippocratic oath? Perhaps not—but I'd like to end this discussion with a short list of shared understandings that might be considered—even by those who don't go along with my definition—as a kind of credo.

1. *For one thing, ethnomusicology is the study of music in culture* (one of the prongs of my bifurcated definition). The concept of "culture" for this approach has its problems, as shown, for example, by Martin Stokes (*New Grove Dictionary* 2001, 8:386–88), but in the end I think it holds up. Ethnomusicologists believe that music must be understood as a part of culture, as a product of human society, and while many pieces of research do not directly address the problem, and many will argue about just what "music in culture" actually means, we insist on this belief as an essential ingredient of the overall approach of our profession.

2. *Just as important, ethnomusicology is the study of the world's musics from a comparative and egalitarian perspective* (the second prong). We endeavor to study musical systems and, in order to comprehend them, follow a comparative approach, believing that comparative study, properly carried out, provides important insights. But we study each music in its own terms, and we try to learn to see it as its own society understands it. We avoid judging musics; fundamentally, all are equally good. We look at each musical culture from a viewpoint that relates it to the world of music, composed of a multitude of musical cultures that are alike in some ways and different in others, and we believe that insight can be gained from comparison. The validity of comparative study has been debated (and the debates are followed in chapter 8). But to me, an interculturally comparative perspective is, like the next two items, a hallmark of ethnomusicology. And I wish to emphasize this: we compare musics, but in terms of quality we regard all musics as fundamentally equal.

3. *Principally, ethnomusicology is study with the use of fieldwork*. As already discussed, we believe that fieldwork, direct confrontation with musical creation and performance, with the people who conceive of, produce, and consume music, is essential, and we prefer concentration on intensive work with small numbers of individual informants to surveys of large populations. Not each piece of research is based on fieldwork, of course, as ethnomusicology includes archival, historical, analytical, and purely theoretical studies. But fieldwork is

part of the field's fundamental personality, and without fieldwork there would be no ethnomusicology.

4. *Ethnomusicology is the study of all of the musical manifestations of a society.* Although we take into account a society's own hierarchy of its various kinds of music, and its musicians, we want to study not only what is excellent but also what is ordinary and even barely acceptable. We believe that we must in the end study all of the world's music, from all peoples and nations, classes, sources, periods of history. We just haven't yet gotten around to all of it. But again, this nonjudgmental comprehensiveness is part of our identity.

5. *We hope that our work will in some sense benefit the world's musicians and ultimately, we dare suggest, the world's peoples.* There is a fundamental commitment to humanity and social justice. At the very least, we wish to avoid doing harm.

These five areas of belief might constitute a kind of credo acceptable to many, though, to be sure, there may be others of my colleagues, who are unlikely to accept any doctrine outright.

A description of what ethnomusicologists believe and do was also provided beginning in 2010 by the Society for Ethnomusicology: ethnomusicologists (1) take a global approach to music (regardless of area of origin, style, or genre); (2) understand music as social practice (viewing music as a human activity that is shaped by its cultural context); and (3) engage in ethnographic fieldwork (participating in and observing the music being studied, frequently gaining facility in another music tradition as a performer or theorist) and historical research. It's interesting to see the emphasis on face-to-face fieldwork at a time when the study of mass media, "virtual" transmission, and phenomena such as YouTube have begun to play a major role.

What makes them (us) tick? Ethnomusicologists seem to be driven by two major but apparently conflicting motivations. They search for universals, hoping to generalize intelligently about the ways in which the world's cultures construct, use, conceive of music. They try to understand human music in the context of human culture as a unitary phenomenon. Yet they never cease to marvel at the incredible variety of manifestations of music. They delight in imparting to the world the strange facts uncovered by musical ethnography and analysis: that among the Siriono of Bolivia, each person may in the past have sung only one tune all of his or her life, identifying the individual with a personal musical stamp (Key 1963; Stumpf 1886, 411); that in the classical music of India, there is an almost incredibly complex interaction of melody and rhythm maintained over a sustained period; and that oppressed minorities have special uses for music in their struggles for improvement. Despite their interest in human universals, ethnomusicologists revel in their knowledge that most generalizations about structure and use of music can be overturned by reference to this or that small



society. They vacillate between a view of music as a unified human phenomenon and as an emblem of the infinite variety of human cultures.

Fundamentally, ethnomusicologists are egalitarians. They become attached to cultures that they study and with which they identify themselves; they have special loves, obligations toward the musics they regard as ethnic or family heritage. They may consciously or tacitly believe in the intellectual, technical, aesthetic, or artistic superiority of certain musics and be able to make a good case for this belief, preferring the classical music of Europe or Asia because of its complexity or the music of "simple" folk because of its presumably unspoiled nature. But, at the bottom line, at some fundamental level of conceptualization, they regard all musics as equal. As Helen Myers states, "Each scholar is eager to defend the music of his or her own people as special and unique [but] no ethnomusicologist will rank the music of his culture over that of his colleague's" (1992, 15-16).

Each music, they believe, is equally an expression of culture, and each culture and each music must be understood first and foremost in its own terms. They consider all musics worthy of study, recognizing that all, no matter how apparently simple, are in themselves inordinately complex phenomena. And they believe that all musics are capable of imparting much of importance to the peoples to whom they belong, and to the world, and thus naturally also to the scholars who study them.

But there is also a sense in which ethnomusicologists are usually not relativists. Taking a sympathetic view of the music of all peoples, they come to believe in the right of each society to determine its own way of life, and they are likely to become dedicated to the improvement of life for the people with whose music they are concerned. They may be impelled to social and political activism in opposition to colonialism or neocolonialism and in support of minorities and, perhaps more typically, of a kind of musical activism that insists that the musics of the world's peoples must be protected, preserved, and taught and the musicians treated fairly and with respect. Although they may wish to study their subject dispassionately, they are in the end often unable to avoid the results of extended contact with humans and their works in a foreign society. They try to bring an understanding of their musics to their own society, believing that the teaching of their subject will in a small way promote intercultural—maybe even international—understanding, that it will combat ethnocentrism, aid in conflict resolution, and build respect for the traditions of the world's societies. Intellectually neutral in their quest for knowledge of musical cultures, they nevertheless have a passion for showing that the music of the oppressed people of the world, of lower classes in rigidly stratified societies, of isolated, indigenous, technically developing peoples, is something innately interesting, something worthy of attention and respect—indeed, something truly magnificent. These attitudes are surely also found among members of other professions. But there are few ethnomusicologists who do not share them.