

Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music.

Olivia A. Bloechl. *New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism*. 2008. Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press. xxii, 279pp, black and white illustrations, music examples, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Hardback, £59.00.

Music of the First Nations: Tradition and Innovation in North America.

Tara Browner, ed. 2009. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 184pp, black and white illustrations, black and white photographs, maps, contributors, index. Cloth, \$37.00.

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The need for more, and more detailed, information on the musical traditions and practices of Indigenous peoples in North America has not waned in the twenty-first century. In fact, as Tara Browner notes, research in this area has actually decreased in recent years. Browner attributes this decrease to various issues ranging from lack of funding to the changing attitudes of those being “studied.” Further difficulties arise when considering how to position music research within the relatively new field of Indigenous studies. There is no doubt that part of the challenge facing researchers of Indigenous musics is finding ways to address the wide diversity that exists, and the need for new ways of approaching the specificities of each community and its musical practices. For these reasons, the two books reviewed here are welcome additions to the literature which many will find useful and

informative. Both books are innovative in distinct ways.

Bloechl’s work seeks a more balanced view of existing music history working towards a “postcolonial musicology.” Drawing on Foucault’s methods of genealogy and discourse analysis, she examines how Native American traditions influenced English and French musical traditions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She argues that colonial musical encounters between the English and French and Indigenous peoples in eastern North America, and to some extent in parts of the Caribbean and northeastern South America, also influenced European musical traditions. This position reverses the more typical approach to the study of Indigenous musics that tends to focus on how Indigenous musical practices have been influenced by European musical concepts and practices, as well as by colonial values.

The book is divided into two main sections: the first deals with sacred music in the New World, and the second with issues of representation in French and English music. In “Part I: Transatlantic Savagery,” Bloechl examines how Protestant and Catholic music discourses were influenced by Native American music. In “Part II: Staging the Indian,” she demonstrates how the exotifying use of Native music in masques, ballets, and operas contributed to stereotypes of musical “savagery,” thereby reinforcing European notions of their own music as more “civilized.”

Bloechl incorporates musicological sources such as scores, music theory, composers’ writings, music criticism, and iconography with less typical sources for musical analysis such as travel

writings, religious prints, demonology, and prophetic writings. This book is a welcome re-interpretation of primary and secondary documents that have contributed significantly to stereotypical notions of Indigenous musical practices.

I do have some reservations about Bloechl's contribution to historical musicology. Although the subject matter and argument are compelling, the writing style is dry, dense and not particularly engaging. The deconstructionist approach is more suitable for graduate students, or at least readers who are well versed in Derrida's notions of *différance*, than to the general reader. Moreover, the issue of cultural appropriation is not addressed despite claims to a "postcolonial" approach. This book is not easily accessible to those non-academics who might be interested in the subject of Indigenous musics.

By contrast, *Music of the First Nations: Tradition and Innovation in North America* presents a much more accessible view of "tradition and innovation" throughout its range of subjects and approaches. Browner's book features nine case studies, each by different authors using different research methods, and representing different nations and tribes. Seldom do we find such a wide range of research approaches in the same collection. Each essay is devoted to specific issues related to the Indigenous people being discussed, and each is an example of how contemporary ethnomusicologists might approach research in these contexts. Each article also illustrates the challenges of research in Indigenous musical practices.

Paula Conlon's article on Inuit drum-dance songs highlights issues in interpreting "artificial recordings" (staged field recordings for which the singers

were asked to perform for the specific purpose of being recorded). She discusses the impact of the recording methodology on performance of the songs, including changes in structure, text, and the compositional process itself. She also touches on many aspects of drum-dance songs such as drum construction, song subjects (such as hunting), and the function of certain categories such as song duels. Drum-dance songs can range in function from social humiliation to dispute resolution. Conlon's analysis is brief but provides an introduction to the genre. Similarly, David Draper's article on Choctaw social dances provides a comparative analysis of six songs focusing on their salient features.

Lucy Lafferty and Elaine Keillor take a very different approach to the interpretation of early recordings. This collaborative effort between a Native and non-Native scholar examines 33 Dene songs recorded between 1913 and 1955. The authors' emphasis is on how Dogrib "land songs" and "love songs" reinforce Dene personal relationships to oneself, others, and the land. Although brief in its analysis, the article does demonstrate the importance of the learning process in constructing meaning in an Indigenous musical culture. Dene history and values are reinforced through the process of learning these songs, by listening, watching, and doing throughout one's life. The message here is that these songs must be examined in context to be fully appreciated and understood.

Laurel Sercombe's contribution further emphasizes the importance of context and performance practice in Indigenous cultures through an examination of myth narratives and song

from the western Washington Coast Salish in the Puget Sound region. Her discussion of the myth narrative known as “Dirty Face” is based on a number of recorded and published versions of the power songs as well as the story. She discusses the intimate relationship between song and storytelling in performance, and the accompanying shift in meaning when the narrative moves to the “sung language.” The myth narrative also carries deeper meaning than its overt subject of personal cleanliness; it is about appropriate social behaviour, and it is a teaching tool for family and community relations.

In contrast to the more traditional musicological approaches used in the first sections of this anthology, ethnographic methods predominate in the rest. Franziska von Rosen’s conversations with traditional Passamaquoddy singer Margaret Paul are particularly interesting. Featuring the use of the dialogic method pioneered by ethnomusicologist Judith Vander, von Rosen’s interview with Paul is presented without much interpretation or analysis, although as Browner indicates in her introduction, von Rosen does “guide” the interview to some extent.¹ Browner’s own contribution is a reminder of the importance of studying regional styles of music. Her approach is rooted in a “deep listening for musical elements” in vocal performances of intertribal pow-wow songs.

This collection of essays encompasses the perspectives of both Native and non-Native scholars while spanning music practices and communities in

both Canada and the U.S. In contrast to Bloechl’s book, there is more emphasis on Native participation in the research process, and on how research can be useful to communities beyond the academic community. There are some shortcomings in this approach, namely the lack of detailed analyses; a sense that some articles are conservative or dated in their approach; and a disconnected tone to the book as whole.

All in all, however, both books are well worth the read for those interested in current research on Native North American musical practices and traditions. I would suggest that Bloechl’s work is better suited to graduate students and others interested in musicology. Browner’s book can serve as an introduction to Indigenous musics for undergraduates or even the general public. I would even suggest reading both books “side by each” (as we say where I come from), which would highlight the theoretical and methodological challenges in researching Native musics, and some of the ways in which these challenges are currently being met. ❀

**Musique et globalisation :
musicologie-ethnomusicologie.**

Jacques Bouët et Makis Solomos (dirs).
2011. Paris : L’Harmattan. 286 pp,
illustrations, exemples musicaux,
bibliographie.

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L’idée de l’ouvrage est attrayante : réunir
autour de la table des musicologues et

¹ See Vander’s book *Songprints: The Musical Experience of Five Shoshone Women*. 1988. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.