

Michael V. Pisani. 2005. *Imagining Native America in Music*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Bibliography and index. xiv pp. 422 pp. ISBN 0-300-10893-1 (hardcover)

Imagining Native America in Music is a fascinating book that addresses many issues pertinent to music research in North America. Written by music historian, conductor, pianist and educator Michael Pisani, the book illustrates Pisani's diverse interests and abilities. This study also reflects his familiarity with the musical works examined, musical codes and their uses in creativity, Native and non-Native relations and shared history, as well as his mastery of academic literature in music history and ethnomusicology, film studies, and cultural theory, among others. At times a very dense text, *Imagining Native America in Music* provides readers with illustrative examples of musical depictions of real and imagined Native Americans by non-Natives since the New World was first "discovered."

Pisani's goal in this work is to analyze various musical representations of Native Americans and to "examine closely what the 'Indianness' of the music suggests, what cultural tools (in this case, elements of music) are fused to achieve a coherent form of expression, and what this expression reveals, not only about the process of creativity, but about America's ongoing preoccupation with its own identity" (p. 4). To do this, Pisani organizes the materials for this book into four large sections: New World American (covering the years 1550-1808 in chapters one and two); Exotic Peoples, Exotic Sounds (1795-1860, chapters three and four); Nostalgia for a Native Land (1890-1911, chapters five, six and seven) and Americans Again (1900-1948, chapters eight and nine). Throughout the book Pisani describes *how* Native Americans are portrayed in various musical works (including plays, films, and live staged works), and asks *why* they are portrayed in the ways they are. For each "period" he examines, Pisani provides important social and historical contextual information regarding common non-Native perceptions and attitudes towards and treatment of Native people, to illustrate how these perceptions and attitudes are reflected in musical and dramatic expressions by non-Natives. For the most part, this overall chronological approach works, as within each section different chapters highlight specific genres, issues or trends. While another organizing structure may have been applied to this study, such as genre studies or regional developments (vis-à-vis local politics), the approach used allows Pisani to illustrate when and why specific musical markers, some of which are still used, were introduced into non-Native compositions depicting Native scenes and ideas.

The introduction highlights many of the central themes and issues explored throughout the text, as well as the common terminology used in musical analyses and discussions. Issues of nationalism and exoticism are highlighted as central themes throughout the book, and Pisani demonstrates that the invention of these constructions is often due to the shifting of cultural boundaries that get invoked when they are being defined. Pisani also introduces readers to semiotic terms that may guide the reader throughout the text when describing the music used to depict Native Americans. Although his discussion of terminology, such as musical rhetoric and musical syntax might make the reader believe he or she needs to know the meanings and applications of such language, the analyses throughout the text are accessible. Indeed, it seems that Pisani invokes these terms to encourage the reader to think of how musical sound and cues are used and might be analyzed. Similarly, drawing on the work of Tara Browner (which was drawn from Peirce), Pisani highlights three categories used when considering native-inspired music: symbolic (inspired by Native music); indexical (approximation of Native music and sounds); and iconic (use of actual Native music materials). These categories are invoked throughout the book and serve as a good framework in considering ways Natives are depicted in musical works over time and in specific social/historical contexts,

and although the book is never overly semiologically theoretical, it is interesting to see how these categories of music can be applied to the pieces examined throughout the book.

The first chapter, "Noble Savagery in European Court Entertainments, 1550-1760" delineates the ways that Europeans projected notions of "Indian" in their art music, drawing primarily from their understanding and assumptions of South American Natives. Illustrating how explorers' and travelers' accounts first served as the basis for European representations of Native people, complemented later with Native "visitors" to Europe, Pisani shows how ideas of Natives were projected on stage and in music. He argues that during this period, very little musical material was actually derived from legitimate sources, rather composers tended to draw upon existing musical cues and tropes in their depiction of a "primitive" "Other." As it was primarily the French who were interested in Native American culture at this time, various examples are used to illustrate the currency of compositions based on assumptions of Native culture, such as works by Lully ("*Les Indiens*," an *entrée* in *L'Amour malade*), and Rameau (*Les Indes galantes*).

Chapter two, "Death, Defiance, and Diplomacy: Resistance in British-American Theater and Song, 1710-1808" likewise examines representations of Native peoples in British and American productions, showing the ways in which these productions and works were used to project an image of "America" that was characterized by conquest and heroic resistance. It is during the eighteenth century, Pisani argues, that distinctions between the "noble Indian" and the untamed savage" became emphasized, due in large part to the increasing demand for Native land and resources, as well as increasing familiarity with Native music and performance. Through Pisani's analysis, he illustrates how representations of Natives changed during this period to reflect changing British attitudes of Natives from simple-minded savages to noblemen fighting for their lives and cultural ways.

"Imagining the Frontier, 1795-1860," examines how exoticism of the American frontier in the early nineteenth century was reflected in music and other arts of this period. Pisani writes: "Exoticism, like myth, enfolds its subject enigmatically within layers of imprecise meaning that hint suggestively at the kernels of truth at its core; hence its allure. In order to understand music's persuasive power, we need to peel back some of those layers in early nineteenth-century musical works about native America" (p. 80). In this chapter, Pisani examines changes in attitudes and policies towards Natives in America and illustrates how these changes were reflected in the musical arts. He illustrates how written descriptions and visual representations (such as the work of George Catlin) and musical works by visitors and North Americans glorified the American frontier, introducing various musical cues for the war dances associated with Native people (such as the use of the minor mode, leaping octaves and fifths, grace notes) which had become common in the 1850s.

A review of various musical pieces that drew upon Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha" (1855) is the goal of chapter four, "'In the Glory of the Sunset': Singing and Playing Hiawatha." Longfellow's hugely successful fictional poem spawned numerous creative works (more than 75) in different genres, largely inspired by the desire to create works of art that were distinctly "American." Pisani focuses on the "Hiawatha"-inspired compositions of three composers, Robert Stoepel, Antonin Dvořák and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor to demonstrate the impact of this poem on the creative output of many people during the nineteenth century. Through his musical analyses, he illustrates the multiple ways that Native America is invoked in these pieces, in some cases drawing on actual Native songs, and in others relying on stereotypical sounds that had come to be associated with Native America.

The impact of ethnography on the production of non-Native musical depictions of Native culture is the subject of chapter five, "Ethnographic Encounters." Examining the work and impact of early ethnologists, some of whom collected and transcribed Native music, Pisani highlights the fact that what was represented in Native-inspired music of the nineteenth century was not indicative of real life at the time. While transcriptions of Native songs found in collections such as Alice Fletcher's *Omaha Music* were used as sources of new "nationalistic" music, other contemporaneous portrayals of Native Americans (at a number of World's Fairs from 1876-1904, for example) continued to project Native people as inferior to Euro-Americans.

Chapter six, "The Nationalism Controversy: Quotation or Intonation?" outlines the various arguments that circulated at the turn of the twentieth century about the role that Native sounds should or might play in creating distinctly "American" music. In this chapter Pisani reviews various works by Dvořák, including his String Quartet in Eb Major, op. 97, his Suite for Piano, Op. 98, and his "New World" Symphony (which was also discussed in more detail in chapter four) and Edward MacDowell's Suite No. 2, which is "said to be the first known orchestral work to incorporate Indian themes" (p. 197). Pisani shows how composers used actual Native music contained in various ethnographies to generate their works, in part to create a nationalist "American" sound.

Probably the most theoretically dense chapter of the book, "In Search of the Authentic: Musical Tribal Portraits, 1890-1911" examines ways that Native songs that had been collected were harmonized and used by composers of instrumental works to create art music that sounded distinctly "Native" by creating new musical cues for Natives. The irony of the context for this "musical awakening" is not lost on Pisani, however, as he notes that "...Indian character pieces translated something of the experience of native America to the dominant society at a time when Indian songs and dances were officially under government suppression" (p. 212).

Chapter eight "'I'm an Indian Too': Playing Indian in Song and on Stage, 1900-1946" examines representations and attitudes towards Natives in theatre (concerts and operas) and film in the early twentieth century. Many works during this period romanticized the American frontier, of which Natives were an essential component, so Native Americans were portrayed not as something from the distant past, rather people who were part of the challenge of defining American culture. Various musical works were created during this period that draw on images and ideas of Natives, with a gradual decreasing of Native roles in productions, and a return to romanticized notions of Natives as disappearing from mainstream society. Love songs were particularly popular at the turn of the century, and it is at this time that the musical cues for Natives, such as "hopping fifths, grace notes, and tom-tom effects" (p. 253) were commonly incorporated in art music compositions to suggest Native subjects. Various films, theatre pieces and large-scale operatic settings of Native themes are discussed, including Rogers' and Hammerstein's musicals *Oklahoma!* and *Annie Get Your Gun*, and the operas *Natoma* by composer Victor Herbert and librettist Joseph Redding, and Charles Cadman's *The Robin Woman* (Shanewis).

In the final chapter of the book, "Underscoring Ancestry: Music of Native America in Film," Pisani examines more contemporary depictions of Natives in music, primarily through American films of the later twentieth century (mostly post-1960). Pisani contextualizes his analysis by presenting the social/political/historical context of this period in which there is a resurgence in awareness of Native people and issues by Natives and non-Natives. He then outlines common musical tropes used in films to enhance Native scenes and characters, the various ways that Natives are represented in selected films (and the musical sounds associated with these depictions), and he illustrates that at the end of the twentieth century a new trend has emerged in which Natives are producing their own successful movies.

The brief conclusion of the book highlights many of the guiding principles that informed readers throughout the book, and states Pisani's findings about musical representations of Native peoples. He writes: "Music, which reflected multiple layers of meaning during all these phases, served as one of the most complex barometers of temperament. Much of this music functioned like a language that engaged the ideologies of its time in a fascinating discourse" (pp. 330-331). Throughout this book Pisani successfully illustrates the correlation between musical representations and the social, historical and political contexts in which these pieces were written and performed.

While I was reading this book I couldn't help but be reminded of some other texts that addressed non-Native artistic representations of Native people, such as Deborah Doxtator's *Fluffs and Feathers: An Exhibit on the Symbols of Indianness* and Daniel Francis' *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. While texts such as these illustrate selected artworks, dramatic renderings and written works that were inspired by and/or attempted to represent Native cultures, they tend to avoid close analyses of musical representations. As such, *Imagining Native America in Music* fills a void that has long existed in studies on non-Native representations of aboriginal populations. Similarly, although there are various sources that detail the power relations and interaction between Natives and non-Natives, such as J.R. Miller's *Skyscrapers hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* and Fergus M. Bordewich's *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century*, studies such as these tend not to look at the arts as sites for negotiation and appropriation of Native culture by non-Natives. *Imagining Native America in Music* draws attention to the correlation between mainstream society's attitudes towards Natives and how Native people and cultures are depicted in music.

The amount of detail and selection of musical materials is exemplary, illustrating Pisani's critical engagement with the music and the social/historical context in which it was composed. However, there are some points that I questioned as I was reading – here I will give two examples. The first concerns Pisani's familiarity with northern Nations, when he writes: "Although Sagard called these four songs representative of 'Huron Music,' the first three were Iroquois (Micmac) in origin and the latter Brazilian" (p. 29). Most people familiar with Native cultures in Canada know that the Iroquois and Mi'kmaq are unrelated Nations, belonging to different language families and having different histories and ways of life based on their geography (Iroquois primarily along the St. Lawrence Seaway, into Ontario and northern New York State and the Mi'kmaq living in maritime provinces and states along the Atlantic Ocean). A second question concerns Pisani's assertion that Douglas Spotted Eagle is Native (p. 326). Although Spotted Eagle is heavily involved in productions and performances of Native music, his identity as a member of a Native community is not clearly communicated in media that include his biography, which has always led me to question his "authenticity." Considering the emphasis on non-Native musical representations of Native people, it seems an oversight not to question whether Spotted Eagle is a non-Native person who has appropriated musical idioms and instruments from Native culture, or if he is a member of that culture. Within the overall context of *Imagining Native Music in America*, these questions are minor points considering the larger contributions and value of this volume.

Finally, as a Canadian reader I know of the ways that language in reference to Native people is different in Canada than the United States. However, I must admit that I was struck by the pervasive use of the term "Indian" throughout the text, as I have grown accustomed to Canadian labels and distinctions that are more "accurate" (First Peoples, Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit). Similarly, the emphasis on representations and works from the United States for the majority of the text is understandable considering the machinations of the music industry in America, but I must admit that my eyes perked up when I came across references to Canadian Nations,

people and the few works by Canadian composers. With the exception of the film *Black Robe*, any references to Canadian content is cursory; indeed, even the passage that addresses *Black Robe* encompasses merely one paragraph in the final chapter. This marginalization of Canadian content is not untypical in works by American authors, and the same criticism could also be made about the rest of the Americas outside of the United States. While the privileging of American music and historiography is not uncommon in American-written materials, this text almost begs a Canadian companion study; indeed, it would be a worthy project for someone to do a comparable study of musical representations of Native peoples vis-à-vis Canada's social/historical context, and Pisani's book would serve as a great point of departure for such a study. Indeed, much research has been done on Canadian song collectors, ethnomusicologists and composers who studied Native Canadian music and/or created Native-inspired works, but a text devoted to this topic would be a valuable and interesting contribution to Canadian music research. Pisani himself acknowledges that there is much more work to be done in the area of representations of Natives through music when he writes: "I wanted this book to provide the historical, cultural, and analytical background with which analyses of these works can be undertaken. I hope others will follow through" (p. 332). Others who read this book will likely be inspired, as I was, to familiarize themselves with many of the works referenced, and to be even more aware of the relationships between musical sounds, societal trends and the sources that have become stock musical representations and cues of Natives.

References

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