

## AURAL HISTORY AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

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The goals of oral/aural history and ethnomusicology are the same. Both try to preserve, to *catch* history, or a culture before it is too late. Oral history can be of a very great help to ethnomusicology. As a matter of fact, it could be incorporated as a discipline, as a part of ethnomusicology, or vice versa. Ethnomusicology can be an important part of sound heritage.

The first step of the ethnomusicologist is to collect the material in order to preserve cultures, *native* cultures, which are based on oral tradition. This collecting part could be taken over by oral history. I can see a tremendous future for this new concept in helping to add material for the respective scholars. Once the material is obtained, then the ethnomusicologist can scientifically analyse it as to form, melody, structure, and rhythm. The musical style in its historical position can be ascertained. Furthermore, where does a specific indigenous culture belong in the evolution of world cultures?

Can we observe analogies of the same stages of development in other cultures? Do these stages run parallel? Do some cultures develop faster than others, and if so, why? Do they develop through the same stages? Each style in music should be studied in view of its historical position. Can we find similar stages of development?

These are the questions ethnomusicology can try to answer through research and thus fill in the links between anthropology and history. Music never lies. It is subconscious, instinctive, and the true expression of a people, and it illustrates their innermost feeling and make-up. In the process of exchange and assimilation, a people acquire tools, weapons, and implements. But they preserve their ancient songs because singing is the fundamental expression of man and has little to do with the changeable surface of life. This is why music is one of the steadiest elements in the evolution of mankind. It is so steady that sometimes peoples of relatively high cultural level hold on to musical styles of an astonishingly archaic character. The study of primitive music is not only a musical one, but a cultural-sociological-anthropological one. The increased interest shown in these aspects has brought about a world-wide demand for more intensive research and greater scope for ethnomusicology.

Now what really is ethnomusicology? How did it develop? Ethnomusicology is a branch of musicology. The name "musicology" actually comes from the German Musikwissenschaft and in translation is "musical science" and embraces all aspects of music in the widest sense, such as music history, form, composition, instruments, harmony, counterpoint, notation, musical styles, music aesthetics, music psychology, and acoustics. In short, the music of all nations, all cultures, at all times.

That part of musicology comprising the music system of the Arabs in third tones called Maquam, the East Indian music in quarter tones called sruti in their scales the ragas and ragginis, the five-tone scale of China and Japan, the interesting sounding Java, Bali, and Siam music with their pelog scale, and

the part of so-called primitive music including African, Australian Aborigini, Maori, and American Indian music, was called comparative musicology.

As Egon Wellesz, one of my professors at Vienna University, put it when heading the music department at Oxford University after the war, "There is nothing against the replacing of the term 'musical science' by the shorter 'musicology' as long as the task and scope of the science . . . are not forgotten."

These concepts of musical science came to life at Vienna with Guido Adler (1881) and his successor Robert Lach, who was my teacher, and in Germany with Hugo Riemann, Carl Stumpf, and their successor Eric von Hornbostel (1865). There were two different approaches in musical science – the German school emphasized the psychological aspect of music, the acoustical phenomena, and the origins of music.

The Viennese school studied more musical style in correlation with the historical approach. It studied the evolution of world culture, searching for stages of development in a historical approach, beginning with the musical composition as the point of departure, the spur of their research.

A third influence emerged after the two initial moving forces in comparative musicology (Berlin-Vienna school), namely, a group of scholars from America. They were mostly anthropologists with an interest in music. They had to their advantage the accessibility of native music, while Vienna and Berlin had to work with archives (with the exception of Lachs, over 2,000 collected songs of non-Slavic tribes living in Russia, Ural Mountains and Caucasus). The American group could easily undertake field trips and collect precious materials such as songs, ceremonies, and customs from the native inhabitants of the Americas. They did not have the fundamental musicological training but provided the resources.

Georg Herzog, a pupil of Hornbostel, was one of the first to combine the old and the new world. Now we are in the admirable position that an amalgamation has taken place with the great influx of scholars trained in the European tradition.

With the urgency of losing the richness of native cultures, especially native music, more interest has evolved, more scientific curiosity has been stimulated, thus enlarging greatly on the concept and scope of comparative musicology and leading to the formation of the discipline ethnomusicology (an emancipation from musicology and called ethnology in Europe). This term "ethnomusicology" was coined by Jaap Kunst, a Dutch musicologist, and in 1955, the Society of Ethnomusicology was founded, using the existing archives extensively and giving scope to the collecting scholars for scientific communication.

With the advance in and the necessity of transcribing the indigenous and native music, another hurdle came up. Our music notation is not adequate for properly transcribing microtones which are so prolific in the cultures of the Americas and the Orient. Ellis, the musicologist, gave us a tool – dividing every semitone or half tone into 100 units called Cents.

I would like to let you hear now an Indian song and project my notation. You will see pluses (+) and minuses (–), wavering lines, and so on, to denote

a truer picture of the music. To measure Cents is difficult for the transcriber and reader of the notation. It can be used only approximately without a machine.

Ha Ma Mai  
sung by Fred Louis and Ella Thompson

Since the first notations many centuries ago, the aim was to communicate the performed music to the eye in order to reproduce it. Here are examples of music notation for this purpose. First were the so-called Neumes of the early centuries until the 10th century. The Nods graphically show the musical line without any fixation of pitch. Then came the first line signifying one definite pitch; the "f." Guido, of Arezzo, in 1050 stabilized the pitch, and through modal and mensural notation we came to the five-line musical staff you have all learnt or seen.

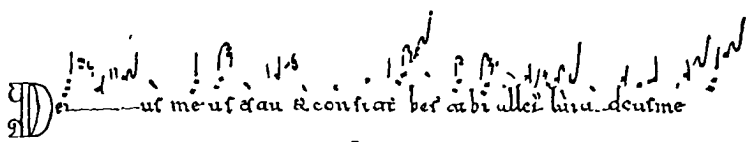


FIG. a

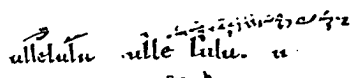


FIG. b

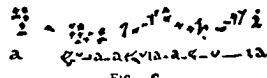


FIG. c

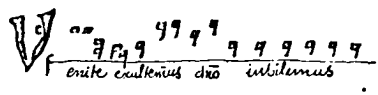


FIG. d

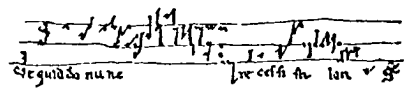


FIG. e

Specimens of Notation in Neumes:— FIG. a — 10-11th century; FIG. b — 11th century; FIG. c — 13th century; FIGS. d, e — 14th century. (From Spanish MSS.)

But the modern composer has been breaking the limitations of this notation during the last 50 years.

However, looking at the scores with their varied notations is a rather dead science; it is not vivid nor very alive, and subject to many interpretations. Here is the advantage of aural history, via the tape recorder, which fixes for posterity accepted interpretations which are sure guidelines, and in this way supplements the scores.

Music is a very complex phenomena, as Franz Fodermayr, of Vienna University, puts it. Pitch, dynamics, and rhythm can be produced identically and yet a different aesthetic result can be obtained. Why? Because music is a living process; it depends on timbre (klangfarbe). What definition can we use for timbre? It is the "attribute of sensation in terms of which a listener can judge that two steady complex tones (sound events) having the same loudness, pitch, and duration are dissimilar." (R. Plomp.)

The latest research tries to solve the enigma of timbre, or tone quality, by experimenting with its measurement and analysis via a marvellous new machine, the sonograph (1959), which produces invaluable results. Walter Graf and Franz Fodermayr (Vienna) investigated the sonograph to aid in music research. Men in Stockholm are also doing research in sound analysis on the sonograph. We are indebted to the technological advance in physical acoustics for the development of the Kay-Sonograph 6061 (1959). The sonograph analyses a sound event, a complex complete tone, into its particles, and graphically designs patterns of the tonal sound.

This same Kay-Sonograph is used to great advantages in medicine. It was found that the first cry of a baby is medically of great importance. This conclusion coincides with the musical concept of the origins of music (Wallaschek). The medical possibilities of diagnosis, e.g., heart disease, respiratory problems, trisomy, can be made with the help of the sonograph. What a tremendous bonus the sonograph would be for aural history also.

In conclusion I would like to tell a little story concerning the importance of exact data-taking with any electric machine, for example, the tape

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imaginative and reasoning powers are termed "ihuma,"<sup>9</sup> a word which frequently appears in the texts of drum dance songs as well. The development of "ihuma" is one of the major psychological functions of games whether they are accompanied by singing, dancing, string figures, or whatever. The throat games fit this function perfectly. There are not only ambiguities in the text once it is understood, but it is a challenge to one's ears and intellect to comprehend the sounds in the first place. It is also considered a challenge to memorize the longer texts. Hence the throat games are one of the most efficient and effective educative tools of the Netsilingmiut.

When I first heard the games I believed they consisted only of abstract sounds and were devoid of a meaningful text. I cannot help but contemplate that my earlier conjectures would be considered hilariously significant by the Inuit — evidence of a complete lack of "ihuma" among the white man. It is the kind of misunderstanding that would be great material for a mocking drum dance song.

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<sup>9</sup>In her study of Uktuhikhalingmiut emotional concepts Jean Briggs defines "ihuma" as that which "makes it possible for a person to respond to his surroundings, physical and social, and to conform to social expectations."

Résumé: *Beverley Cavanagh écrit au sujet de jeux provenant de la gorge de femmes Esquimaudes et donne des exemples qu'elle a pris en note auprès de femmes de Netsilik, au cours d'un voyage de recherches à Gjoa Haven en 1975.*

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### **Aural History and Ethnomusicology** (continued from page 42)

recorder. Not jumping to conclusions, not admitting defeat of failure to understand something, but correctly transmitting the words, the information, as nebulous as it might at first appear. In my own collecting of information from my Indian chiefs, I must admit that I often did not grasp completely their meaning, but never the less recorded faithfully their exact wording. There lies a great danger if one does not understand words or meanings and tries to interpret oneself or lead one's informant. One needs a degree of humility in accepting the unknown as partly one's own failing.

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Résumé: *Dr. Ida Halpern explique la relation qui existe entre l'ethnomusicologie et l'histoire orale et souligne le fait que toutes deux ont le même but: préserver l'histoire d'une culture avant qu'il ne soit trop tard. Elle décrit ce qu'est l'ethnomusicologie et comment elle s'est développée et en fait un rapprochement avec sa collection personnelle de chants Indiens de la Colombie Canadienne.*