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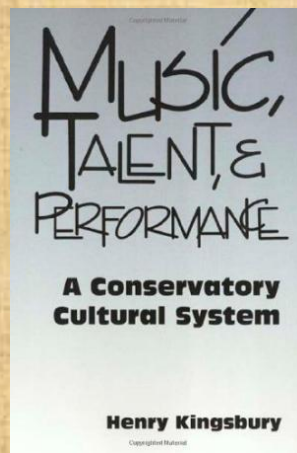
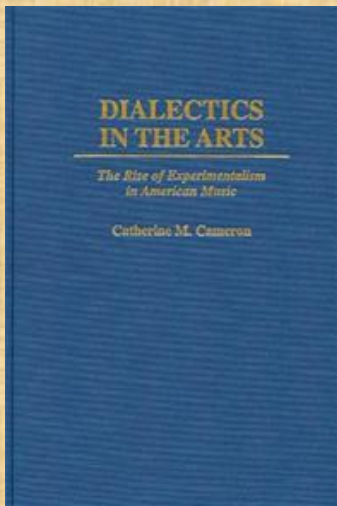
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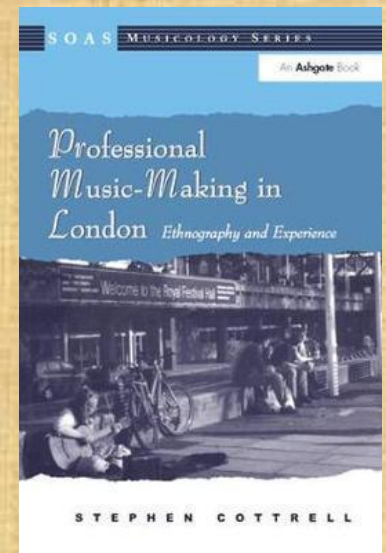
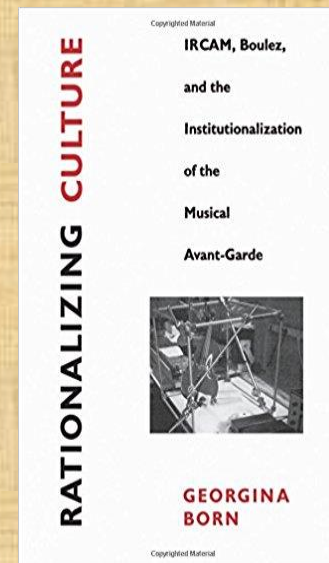
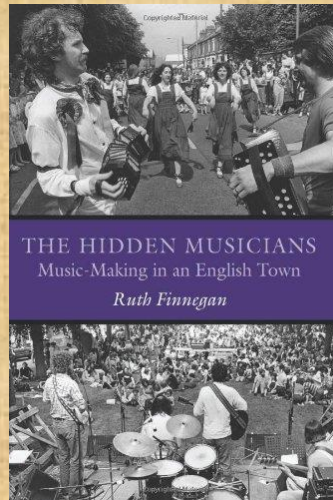
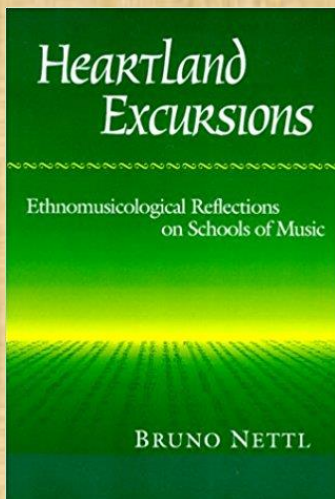
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The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music and the Application of Meta-Critical Scholarship on Ethnography: Reinscribing Critical Distance

University of Cambridge, Faculty of Music
Research Colloquium Series, 28 October
2020



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Ethnomusicology

To the question: what is the study-object of comparative musicology, the answer must be: mainly the music and the musical instruments of all non-European peoples, including both the so-called primitive peoples and the civilized Eastern nations. Although this science naturally makes repeated excursions into the field of European music, the latter – especially in its modern art forms – is, in itself, only an indirect object of its study.

The name of our science is, in fact, not quite characteristic; it does not ‘compare’ any more than any other science. A better name, therefore, is that appearing on the title page of this book: *ethnomusicology*.

Jaap Kunst, *Musicologica: A study of the nature of ethno-musicology, its problems, methods, and representative personalities* (Amsterdam: Indisch Instituut, 1950).

The study-object of ethnomusicology, or, as it originally was called: comparative musicology, is the *traditional* music and musical instruments of all cultural strata of mankind, from the so-called primitive peoples to the civilized nations. Our science, therefore, investigates all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-Western art music. Besides, it studies as well the sociological aspects of music, as the phenomena of musical acculturation, i.e. the hybridizing influence of alien musical elements. Western art- and popular (entertainment-) music do not belong to its field.

The original term ‘comparative musicology’ (vergleichende Musikwissenschaft) fell into disuse, because it promised more - for instance, the study of mutual influences in Western art-music - than it intended to comprise, and, moreover, our science does not ‘compare’ any more than any other science.

Jaap Kunst, *Ethnomusicology: A study of its nature, its problems, methods and representative personalities*, third edition (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959).

Ethnography (1)

‘Literally “writing about the people”, this denotes research which concentrates on directly observing and describing in detail the activities of some people.’

‘Ethnography’, in *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*, edited Steve Bruce and Steven Yearly (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 95.

‘Literally, ethnography means writing about people, or writing an account of the way of life of a particular people.’

Martyn Hammersley, ‘ethnography’, in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited George Ritzer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), p. 1479.

‘Quite literally, it [ethnography] means *writing about the people*. Though we anthropologists would likely not turn to the dictionary definition, others well might, and this is what they would find: “a scientific description of races and peoples with their customs, habits and mutual differences.” [*taken from Shorter English Dictionary, sixth edition*] To us, of course, this sounds hopelessly anachronistic. We would move at once to remove all reference to race. We would insist that there is far more to description than the mere cataloging of habits and customs. In thickening our descriptions, and allowing a real historical agency to the people who figure in them, we might want to qualify the sense in which these accounts could be considered to be scientific. Ethnographic description, we might well say, is more an art than a science, but no less accurate or truthful for that.’

Tim Ingold, ‘That’s enough about ethnography!’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnography Theory* vol. 4, no. 1 (2014) p. 385.

Ethnography (2)

‘Ethnographic research (also referred to as *field research* or *participant observation*) is a qualitative social science method that involves the observation of the interactions of everyday life... The theoretical intent of ethnography is inductive, generating concepts and theories from the data.’

Carol A. B. Warren, ‘Ethnography’, in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, second edition, edited Edgar F. Borgatt and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2000), p. 852.

‘Involving the first-hand exploration and immersive participation in a natural research setting to develop an empathic understanding (Verstehen) of the lives of persons in that setting,’

Mick Bloor and Fiona Wood, ‘ethnography’, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, edited Bryan S. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 176.

‘ethnography is the systematic description of a single contemporary culture, often through ethnographic fieldwork.’

Peter Wyatt Wood, ‘Ethnography and Ethnology’, in *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, edited Thomas Barfield (Malden: Blackwell, 1997), p. 157.

Ethnography (3)

‘Ethnography is a methodology – a theory, or set of ideas – about research that rests on a number of fundamental criteria. Ethnography is iterative-inductive research; that is to say it evolves in design through the study (see **analysis**, **coding**, **fieldnotes**, **grounded theory**, and **induction**). Ethnography draws on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, and **asking questions** (see **interviews**, **participant observation**, and **visual ethnography**). It results in richly written accounts that respect the irreducibility of human experience (see **writing**), acknowledges the role of theory (see **generalisation**), as well as the researcher’s own role (see **reflexivity**), and views humans as part object/part subject...’

Karen O’Reilly, *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 2009), p. 3.

If we were to limit our conceptualization of ethnography to its descriptive/analytical component, it would allow us to think more clearly about the ways that we gather the data making up such a piece of work. Defining ethnography, therefore, as a written or filmic depiction of a people reminds us that participant observation is but one way among a number of approaches that enable the social researcher to produce an ethnography. Participant observation may well be the most effective way to arrive at the final destination in some, and perhaps even most, cases, but it is not essential to the effective production of a descriptive-analytical account of a social grouping.

Jenny Hockey and Martin Forsey, ‘Ethnography is Not Participant Observation: Reflections on the Interview as Participatory Qualitative Research’, in *The Interview: An Ethnographic Approach*, edited Jenny Skinner (New York: Berg, 2012), p. 73.

Ethnography (4)

‘A term usually applied to the acts both of observing directly the behaviour of a social group and producing a written description thereof. Sometimes also referred to as fieldwork...’

John Scott, ‘ethnography’, in *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, fourth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 223.

‘An ethnography is a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do.’

Alan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User’s Guide to Sociological Language*, second edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 111.

As Clifford Geertz (1988) notes, “‘thick description’” is the foundation of ethnography. But equally important is analysis: the generation of concepts, patterns, or typologies from thick description, and their linkage to concepts, theories, and literatures already established in the discipline.

Carol A. B. Warren, ‘Ethnography’, in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, second edition, edited Edgar F. Borgatt and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2000), p. 852.

Ethnography (5)

Ethnography is not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting, and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting. It is premised on the view that the central aim of the social sciences is to understand people's actions and their experiences of the world, and the ways in which their motivated actions arise from and reflect back on these experiences. Once this is the central aim, knowledge of the social world is acquired from intimate familiarity with it, and ethnography is central as a method because it involves this intimate familiarity with day-to-day practice and the meanings of social action. To access social meanings, observe behaviour and work closely with informants and perhaps participate in the field with them, several methods of data collection tend to be used in ethnography, such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation, personal documents and discourse analyses of natural language. As such, ethnography has a distinguished career in the social sciences. There have been 'travellers tales' for centuries, going back even to antiquity, which count as a form of ethnographic research in that they purported to represent some aspect of social reality (in this case, a country, group or culture) on the basis of close acquaintance with and observation of it, although often they reflected the cultural and political prejudices of their own society.

John Brewer, *Ethnography* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), p. 11.

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (1)

- Critiques of ‘ethnographic realism’ as part of a ‘postmodern turn’
- Focus on the nature of ethnographic *writing*, and possible employment of experimental literary models.
- Questioning possibility of distance and dispassionate observation on the part of the ethnographer.

George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, ‘Ethnographies as Texts’. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982), pp. 25–69

George E. Marcus, ‘Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System’. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 165-93.

Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (2)

James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

‘With expanded communication and intercultural influence, people interpret others, and themselves, in a bewildering diversity of idioms – a global condition of what Mikhail Bakhtin (1953) called “heteroglossia”. This ambiguous multivocal world makes it increasingly hard to conceive of human diversity as inscribed in bounded, independent cultures.’ (pp. 22-23).

‘The ethnographer always ultimately departs, taking away texts for later interpretation (and among those “texts” taken away we can include memories – events patterned, simplified, stripped of immediate context in order to be interpreted in later reconstruction and portrayal). The text, unlike discourse, can travel. If much ethnographic writing is produced in the field, actual composition of an ethnography is done elsewhere.’ (p. 39)

Clifford proposed the use of regular long quotations from informants, in place of a singular, supposedly disinterested, vantage point (pp. 46-53). This view was echoed in Charles Kurzman, ‘Convincing Sociologists: Values and Interests in the Sociology of Knowledge’, in *Ethnography Unbound: Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*, edited Michel Burawoy et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 250-68.

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (3)

Martyn Hammersley, *What's Wrong with Ethnography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992).

- Approaches based on data collection involve an imposition of the research's assumptions and are used to generate questionable generalisations.
- Ethnographers frequently rely upon what people *say* they do, rather than observing what they *actually* do, and mediating between the two.
- Ethnographers should produce *theoretical* description of the areas they research, employing wider concepts and theories.
- In response to some of the postmodern turn, novelty of presentation or subject matter should be approached cautiously, as should clear political advocacy.
- Ethnographers should not simply dismiss judgment from others, or claims that their models are not like theories in any conventional sense. By claiming immunity from wider critique, ethnographers undermine their work being viewed as *scholarship*, and imply that it might be judged solely in terms of pragmatic utility or market appeal.
- Ethnographic realism, however, has major limits, and there is not 'one true description that the ethnographer's account seeks to approximate' (p. 24)
- Many ethnographic descriptions are highly selective and are often used to bolster already-existing theories or priorities. This may not be wholly avoidable, but ethnographers should not deliberately omit relevant things, should still be guided by a search for something which can be argued to be true, and should above all understand events in context.

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (4)

John van Maanen, 'An End to Innocence: The Ethnography of Ethnography', in *Representation in Ethnography*, edited John van Maanen, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 1-35.

Van Maanen returned to the vexed question of what concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality' mean in this context, but noted how infrequent it was that ethnographers would overturn previous representations by restudying the same group of people, in contrast to scientific and historical scholarship in which data is subject to repeated scrutiny.

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Harry F. Wolcott, 'Making a Study "More Ethnographic"', in *Representation in Ethnography*, pp. 79-111.

- Critical of 'haphazard descriptiveness' (a term from George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, rev. 1999), p. 56) in ethnographic work, simply listing factual information without further interpretation – for him interpretation was fundamental to separating ethnographic from merely qualitative/descriptive work.
- Culture is 'an abstraction based on the ethnographer's observations of actual behaviour' (pp. 86-7).
- Also critical of simply inclusion of lots of detail, vague references to culture, or simply labelling work as 'ethnographic'.

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (5)

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small Places, Big Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Pluto, 2015).

- Fieldwork should not be idealised, nor exalted claims made for it, especially as it is often reliant upon rigid dichotomies.
- Anthropologists' careerist concerns may be more significant than any particular love of generating knowledge.
- Many anthropologists have been inclined simply to account for a particular society or culture without explaining any of the causes which more conventional historical study might reveal.
- For this reason, combined with tendencies towards 'realism', ethnography is very susceptible to reification (my term, not Eriksen's), whereby a particular existing and historically contingent state of cultural affairs is presented as if innate and inevitable.

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (6)

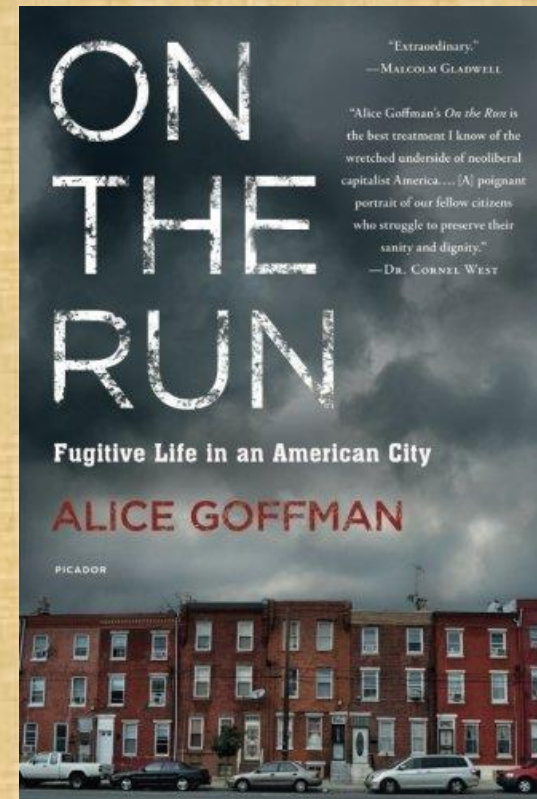
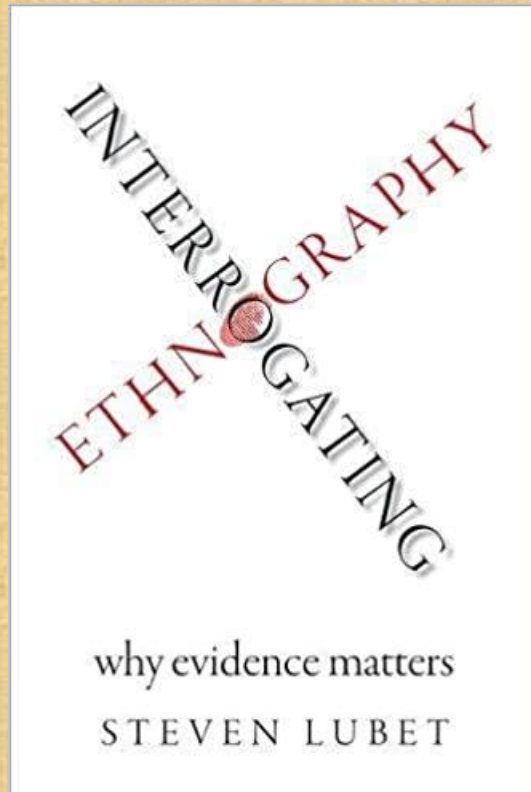
Tim Ingold, 'That's enough about ethnography!', *HAU: Journal of Ethnography Theory* vol. 4, no. 1 (2014), pp. 383-95.

- The term 'ethnographic' is frequently used as 'a modish substitute for qualitative' (echoing Wolcott), and generates an over-abundance of secondary literature as a substitute for actually engaging in the activity.
- Fieldnotes are often spun as 'data', and conceptions derived at a later stage are often projected backwards.
- The term 'ethnography' might be dropped in place of 'participant observation', though Ingold was sceptical whether one can really observe while simultaneously participating.
-

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (7)

Steven Lubet, *Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

- Written in response to success of Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Concerned about both scholarly and ethical issues entailed in this work.



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Questions Lubet asks of ethnographic work:

- (i)To what extent have the ethnographers relied on rumours or hearsay?
- (ii)How much have they fact-checked their sources?
- (iii)Have they ignored inconvenient evidence?
- (iv)Have they accepted the word of unreliable witnesses?
- (v)Have their arguments exceeded what could be factually substantiated?

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (8)

Lubet draws upon Mitchell Duneier (in 'How Not to Lie with Ethnography'. *Sociological Methodology* 41 (2011), p. 3) conception of an 'ethnographic trial', in which ethnographers would defend work against malpractice charges, and demonstrate that they have provided 'a reasonably reliable rendering of the social world', not simply one untroubled by the possibility of alternative perspectives which might be provided by 'witnesses they have never met or talked to'.

Duneier also developed the concept of the 'ethnographic fallacy', an 'epistemology that relies exclusively on observation', which 'sharply delineates the behavior at close range but obscures the less visible structures and processes that engender and sustain the behavior.' (Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016))

Critical Issues in Ethnography since the 1980s (9)

Lubet finds:

- Ethnographers frequently rely upon hearsay.
- Many offer opinions on specialised areas that exceed their professional expertise.
- Some are far from scrupulous in checking available documentation.
- There is much use of questionable recollections from informants, or taking unreliable witnesses at face value.
- Evidence is often cherry-picked to support an a priori hypothesis.
- Rumour and folklore are also rarely questioned.
- There are many abuses of anonymisation, for example creating composite individuals from multiple live subjects, without making this clear to the reader. Details from anonymous informants are often altered in ways which can change the arguments.

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Prescribes:

- Ethnographers should lessen reliance on unsourced generalities.
- Composites should be avoided.
- When there are 'minor' changes to data, this must be clearly documented.
- Direct observation should be clearly delineated from other sources, and from hearsay, rumour and folklore.
- A general attitude of scepticism should be taken towards informants
- Contrary facts and inconvenient witnesses should be included.
- Third parties should check field notes, and ethnographers fact-check each other's work.

Ethnomusicologists on other types of musicology and Western Art Music in general (1)

Australian music syllabi are 'colonialist'. Their approach 'teaches all music from an analytical perspective that imposes Eurocentric ways of understanding music that can be shown to contradict the ways music's creators may have of conceptualizing their music and its meanings.'

Peter Dunbar-Hall, 'Training, community and systemic music education: The aesthetics of Balinese music in different pedagogic settings', in *Cultural Diversity in Music Education: Directions and Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by Patricia Shehan Campbell, John Drummond, Peter Dunbar-Hall, Keith Howard, Huib Schippers and Trevor Wiggins (Brisbane: Australian Academic Press, 2005), p. 128.

'To the extent that musicologists concerned largely with the traditions of Western art music were content with a singular canon- any singular canon that took a European-American concert tradition as a given – they were excluding musics, peoples, and cultures. They were, in effect, using the process of disciplining to cover up the racism, colonialism, and sexism that underlie many of the singular canons of the West. They bought into these "-isms" just as surely as they coopted an "-ology." Canons formed from "Great Men" and "Great Music" forged virtually unassailable categories of self and Other, one to discipline and reduce to singularity, the other to belittle and impugn.'

Philip V. Bohlman, 'Epilogue: Musics and Canons', in *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons*, edited Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 198.

Ethnomusicologists on other types of musicology and Western Art Music in general (2)

‘It is my belief that a symphony concert is a celebration of the ‘sacred history’ of the western middle classes, and an affirmation of faith in their values as the abiding stuff of life. [...]

Without an awareness of the ritual function of music, the ‘researches’ of Boulez and his colleagues of the Paris IRCAM remain a naive, gee-whiz celebration of the most superficial aspects of modern technology, and claims made by them and for them that they are attempting to come to terms with its problems and possibilities for the sake of the community as a whole seem no more credible than similar claims made by ICI, British Nuclear Fuels Limited – or Buckminster Fuller, whose ‘rational madness’ (to use Alex Comfort’s telling phrase) seems often to be mirrored in Boulez’s writings about music.’

Christopher Small, ‘Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the Nature of a Symphony Concert’, in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 19, 29.

‘..the music school’s social model is the symphony orchestra – a replication of a factory or a plantation – with its dictatorial arm-waving director, the hierarchical structure of its sections, its rigid class structure that doesn’t permit promotion of the first violist [*sic*] to conductor, with the mediation of the concert master (overseer), who presents the orchestra to the conductor (owner). Music schools are usually run more autocratically than other departments....’

Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-One Issues and Concepts*, new edition (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 189.

Ethnomusicologists on other types of musicology and Western Art Music in general (3)

‘the evidence of profound public antipathy to serialist music cannot be ignored and must be translated into a transformed compositional practice or risk a music that cannot communicate, because no one will listen’;

‘The aesthetic impotence of an “autonomous modernism confronted historically with the aesthetic vibrancy of popular cultural forms”;

‘the sense of sterility attached to composition techniques such as serialism based originally on the primacy of pitch, the lack of an approach to musical form, the errors of mid-century rationalism and scientism, the conceptual weakness of *musique concrete* – research on timbre and perception has been held, at IRCAM and more widely, to offer ways forward.’

Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutions of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 6, 39, 198.

In the work of ‘traditional’ musicologists: ‘There is seldom room in their texts for other voices, except those fellow academics who are deemed worthy of inclusion for the purpose of theoretical engagement or as an obligation arising out of academic convention.’

Stephen Cottrell, *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (1)

Robert Faulkner, 'Orchestra Interaction: Some Features of Communication and Authority in an Artistic Organization'. *Sociological Quarterly* 14 (1973), pp. 147–57.

- A balanced account of perceptions relating to hierarchies between orchestra players and conductors.

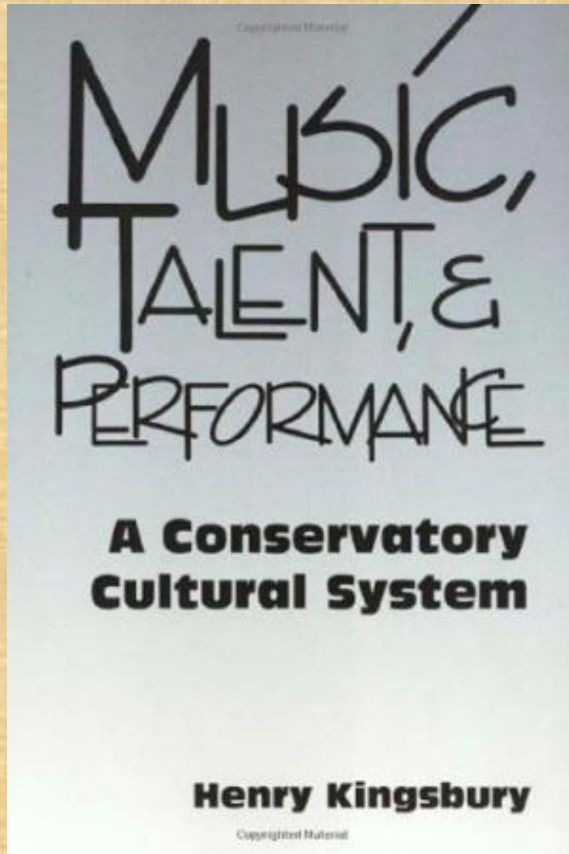
Catherine M. Cameron, 'Dialectics in the Arts: Composer Ideology and Culture Change' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL, 1982). Then *Dialectics in the Arts: The Rise of Experimentalism in American Music* (Westport, CO, and London: Praeger, 1996).

- One of the only studies to look at nationalistic ideologies behind composers' aesthetic positions. But lacks meaningful conception of the 'experimental', and relies almost exclusively on composer's own pronouncements.

Christopher Small, 'Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the Nature of a Symphony Concert', in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event*, ed. Avron Levine White (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 6-32.

- On rituals of a symphony concert. But disregards historical contingency and variability of many of these factors, presenting them as if atemporal. Also makes extravagant claims about motivations of listeners, without evidence.

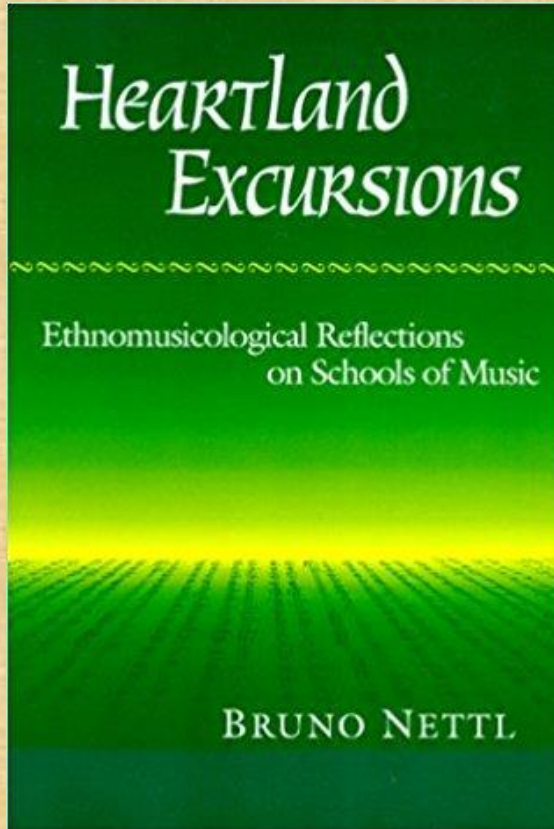
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (2)



Henry Kingsbury, *Music Talent, & Performance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

- Many major generalisations about music, pedagogy, analysis, canons, prestige, audience, so on.
- Motivations attributed to teachers, students, administrators.
- Problems of erroneous claims, e.g. that Hindemith was a composer and theorist, but not a performer.
- Reasonable claim that naming teachers lends prestige to students, though Kingsbury does the same on his website when describing himself as ‘A onetime disciple of the late Alan Merriam’ (see <http://henrykingsbury.com/hokbio.htm>).
- Also very disparaging about ‘talent’ and common terms such as ‘expression’.

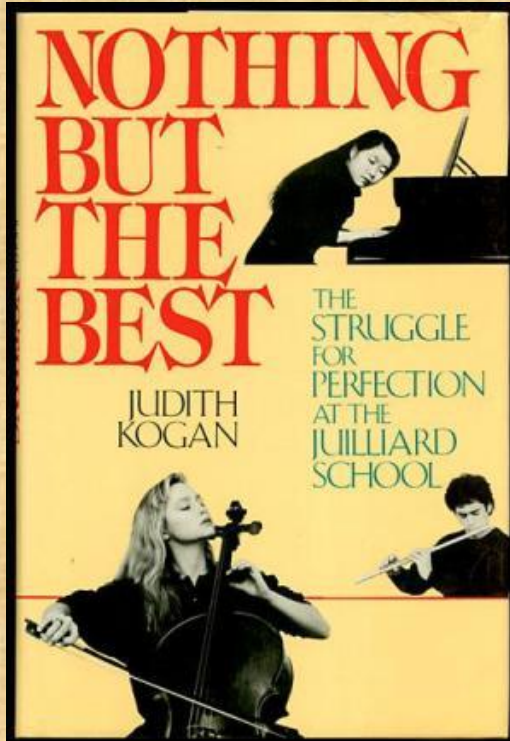
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (3)



Bruno Nettl, *Heartland Excursions* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press: 1995)

- In many ways similar in nature to Kingsbury.
- Disregards a significant amount of historical and contemporary evidence, for example in the picture of the history of the orchestra.
- Much judgment 'from above' and loaded language.
- An almost wholly derogatory view of Western art music compared to an idealised one of music from elsewhere in the world.

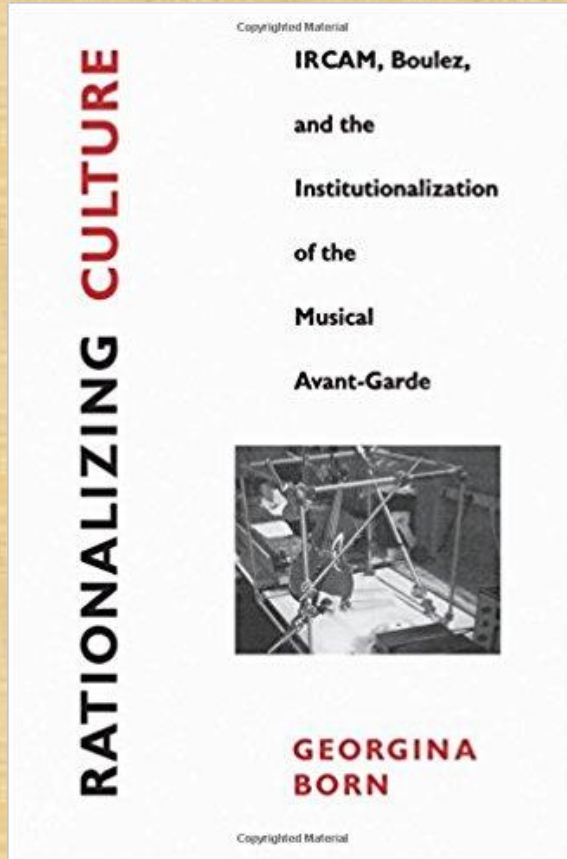
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (4)



Judith Kogan, *Nothing But the Best: The Struggle for Perfection at the Juilliard School* (New York: Random House, 1987).

- Not an ethnographic or academic study, but not so fundamentally different to Kingsbury and Nettl, other than in writing style.
- An account of competition, gossip, the ritual of auditions, pressure on students, godlike nature of teachers, role of competitions, etc.

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (5)



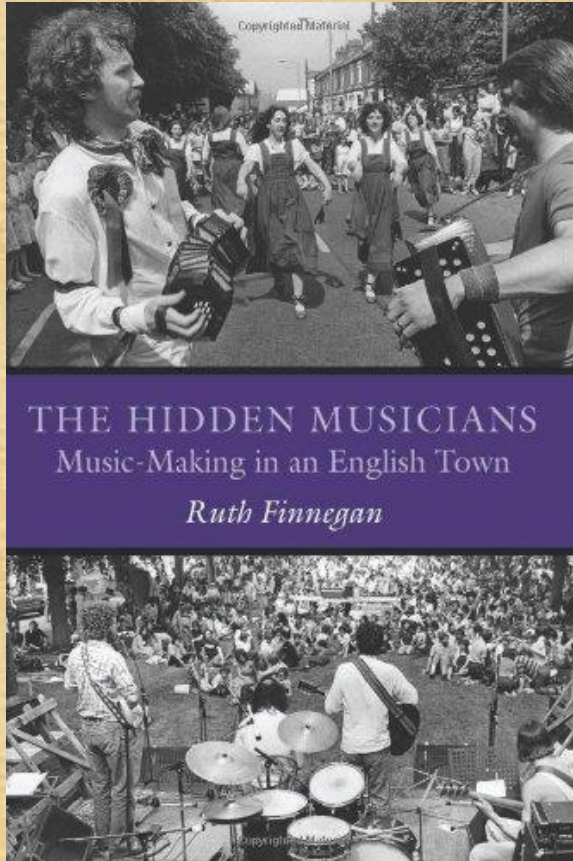
Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutions of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

- Has been much criticised by Célestin Deliège, Björn Heile, Richard Herrmann, Ben Watson, and myself for a range of methodological, ideological and other problems, and lack of wider contextual knowledge.
- An anthropological study without any detailed engagement with the music produced at IRCAM, but which does include a significant number of pronouncements upon this music.

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (6)

- Similar problems of lack of engagement with aural evidence, external verification or exploration of provenance and meanings of aesthetic concepts can be found in Yara El-Ghadban, 'Facing the music: Rituals of belonging and recognition in contemporary Western art music'. *American Ethnologist* 36, no. 1, pp. 140–60, derived primarily from the views of other anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, and Hettie Malcolmson, 'Composing Individuals: Ethnographic Reflections on Success and Prestige in the British New Music Network'. *twentieth-century music* 10, no. 1, pp. 115–36, in construction of a trinity of 'mainstream'/'new complexity'/'experimental' approaches to composition on the basis of casual remarks by a handful of UK composers.
- These disregard Hammersley's dialectic between what subjects say they do, and *actually* do, while lack of external verification comes up against Lubet's questions (i), (ii) and (iv), as well as Hammersley's wider requirement of contextual knowledge.

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (7)



Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

- Obsessively detailed description of every aspect of music-making in Milton Keynes: orchestras, amateur choirs, brass bands, folk groups, 100 small bands.
- Findings relatively modest.
- Lacks incisive research questions, critical dialogue with the subjects, and much sustained interpretation.
- ‘Haphazard descriptiveness’ in the manner of Wolcott.

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (8)

Kay Kaufman Shelemay, 'Toward an Ethnomusicology of the Early Music Movement: Thoughts on Bridging Disciplines and Musical Worlds', *Ethnomusicology* 45 (2001), pp. 1–29.

- 'Early music practitioners, speaking from their own experiences, referred often to the scholarly literature and critical editions, which they know intimately and on which they draw in preparing detailed notes for concert programs and published recordings.'
- 'Thus the early music movement, while drawing on music of the historical past, is powerfully informed by the creative impulses of its practitioners and the aesthetics of the present.'
- 'Musicians in all of the ensembles with which we worked testified to the centrality of creative activity in their conceptualization and performance of musical repertory.'
- 'Many of our associates provided considerable detail about their instruments, conveying not just extraordinary technical knowledge, but the instrument's history and social significance with great elegance.'

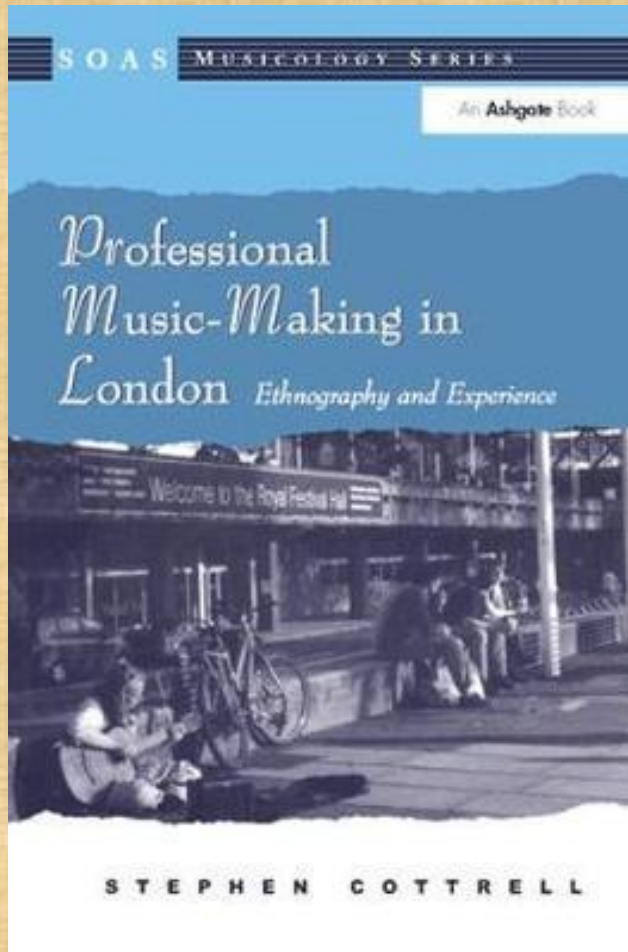
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (9)



Amanda Bayley and Michael Clarke, *Evolution and Collaboration: the composition, rehearsal and performance of Finnissy's Second String Quartet* (DVD: PALATINE, 2011). Also several associated articles.

- A series of quotations and interview clips with Finnissy and the performers, together with scanned excerpts from the score and the sketches, with minimal commentary, interrogation and reflection.
- Wider body of Finnissy scholarship ignored, meaning that findings on use of musical borrowing, random numbers in composition, or unsynchronised parts, seem more original findings than they are.
- But fruitful material on division of rehearsal time and Finnissy's use of metaphors.

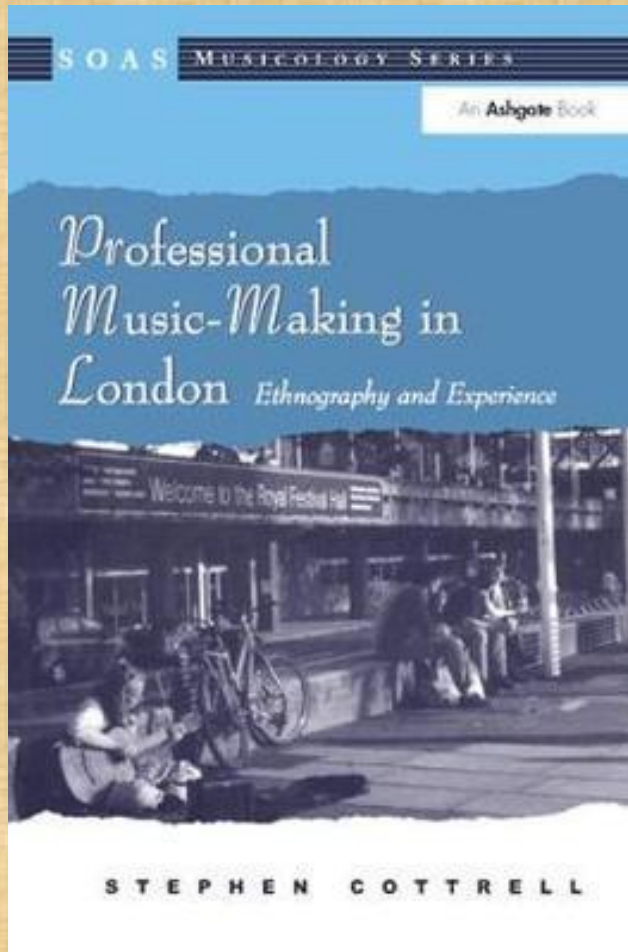
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (10)



Stephen Cottrell, *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

- More methodologically aware.
- Heavy use of quotations in manner advocated by Clifford and Kurzman, from diaries and questionnaires while working as a freelance musician – rare case of an emic study of this type.
- Findings on valorisations of types of sounds, perceptions of musicians' pay, workings of deputising system, need for social skills, greater freedoms afforded by playing in smaller groups, resentment towards conductors, differing amounts of work for different orchestral players, etc.
- Most things familiar to professional musicians, but Cottrell does make them available to a wider readership (whereas Shelemay did not reveal much not already in scholarly literature).
- But findings quite modest, and a lot of unmediated rendition of passing views and gossip from insiders.

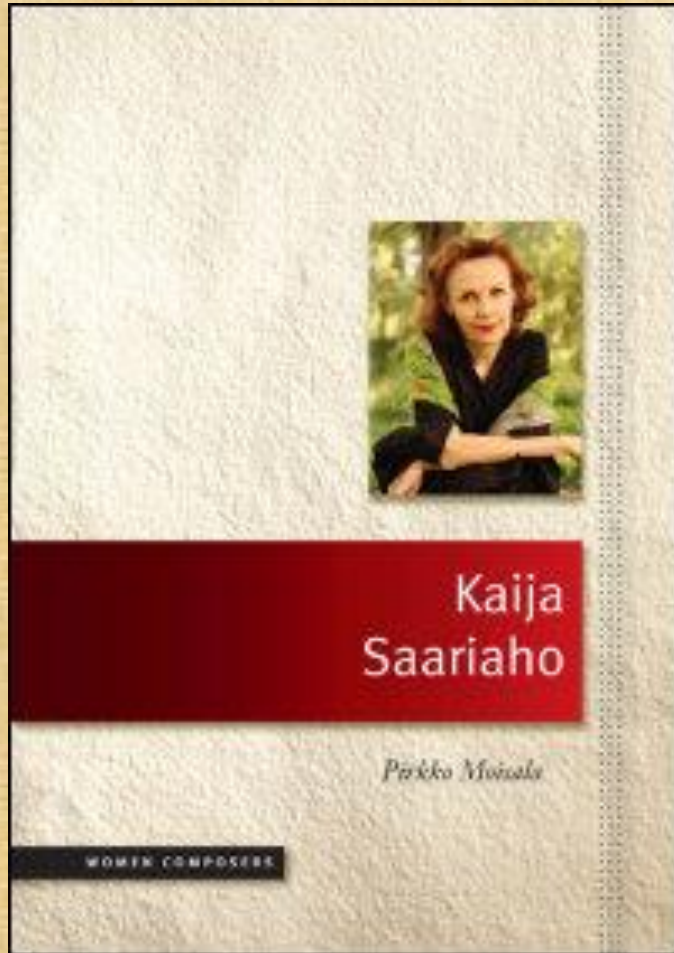
Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (11)



Stephen Cottrell, *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

- Clifford's points about 'expanded communication and intercultural influence' and the difficulties inherent in conceiving 'bounded, independent cultures'. Problem of treating the London musical world as an almost self-contained 'culture'.
- 'Culture' afforded an ontological primacy over wider social and economic forces.
- Viewing a particular instance of professional music-making as something that *is* is a case of Steinberg's ethnographic fallacy and Eriksen's warnings about ossification.
- This has to do with a very ideological approach, and exclusion of other methods and scholarship.

Key Ethnomusicological Texts on Western Art Music (12)



Pirkko Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

- References Bakhtin and ‘heterophony of meanings given to musical works’, echoing Clifford.
- Based upon interviews with Saariaho and other musicians, agents and conductors, as well as observation of rehearsals and performances.
- Wishes to ‘to reveal the ingredients of Saariaho’s music, to explain why it is as it is, and how it has developed over the years’.
- Eschews score-based analysis, but does not use other methods such as analysis of sonic spectra. Instead relies on generalised descriptions of rehearsals and performances.
- Many unmediated quotes from critics, but unfavourable critics are pathologized. At odds with Duneier’s ‘stance of the skeptic’.
- Many rigid dichotomies and lack of contextual knowledge on wider new music.

Application of Meta-Critical Scholarship on Ethnography

Duneier's 'ethnographic trial':

- Small, Kingsbury, Nettl, Born, Bayley/Clarke, Moisala all vulnerable because of sidestepping perspectives from others. But Bayley/Clarke, or Moisala, not really presenting a 'rendering of the social world', so this issue not so relevant.

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- Acute problem in work of Cameron and Born, and afflicts Bayley/Clarke, Cottrell, and especially Moisala.

Hammersley concerns about selective ethnographic descriptions and deliberate omissions:

- Cannot really be assessed for Bayley/Clarke, Cottrell, Moisala. Small, Kingsbury, Nettl, Born problematic in these respects, also because of limitations of contextual knowledge.

Application of Meta-Critical Scholarship on Ethnography

Description and analysis (Hammersley and Eriksen critical of simple description without analysis or interpretation):

- Common understanding of description to be distinguished from Geertz, 'thick description', more a type of analysis.
- Eriksen asks that analysis entails concepts which go beyond what can be simply found from the perspectives of subjects.
- Not the case for Bayley/Clarke, nor Moisala.
- Crucial distinction between analysis and *repetition*.
- Simply letting subjects 'speak for themselves' runs risk of perpetuating archetypes of the 'noble savage'.

Application of Meta-Critical Scholarship on Ethnography

Lubet's five tests:

(i) To what extent have the ethnographers relied on rumours or hearsay?

An issue with Kingsbury and Nettl.

(ii) How much have they fact-checked their sources?

A major issue with the work of Cameron and Born.

(iii) Have they ignored inconvenient evidence?

Cottrell's work has the potential for this, but there is no indication of having done so, unlike with Cameron, Kingsbury, Nettl and Born; also with Bayley/Clarke's disregarding of their relevant scholarship, or Moisala's lack of diverse perspectives.

(iv) Have they accepted the word of unreliable witnesses?

Cottrell's musicians may not be wholly reliable in terms of their views on musicians and conductors, as with the subjects of the studies of Cameron, Born and Malcolmson.

(v) Have their arguments exceeded what could be factually substantiated?

There are no real arguments put forward in Bayley/Clarke, or Moisala. Cottrell's are of an appropriate scope on the basis of the data employed, but this is not the case for Small, Kingsbury, Nettl or Born.

Danger of Hagiographical Treatment of Subjects

- In a post-colonial context, understandable that ethnographers are cautious about questioning their subjects too much, because of issues of power differentials. But this issue changes in a non-colonial context.
- As a result, Bayley/Clarke and Moisala's work is hagiographic in nature, as are various other writings. Cottrell unwilling to question subjects, but hagiography may be too strong a term.

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- As a result, Bayley/Clarke and Moisala's work is hagiographic in nature, as are various other writings. Cottrell unwilling to question subjects, but hagiography may be too strong a term.
- Many ethnomusicologists highly critical of canonisation within Western art music. But ethnomusicology of Western art music has its own canons: texts of Small, Kingsbury, Finnegan, Nettl, Born, Shelemay, Cottrell, etc., as well as others by Alan Merriam, Nettl, John Blacking, Marcia Herndon/Norma McLeod, invariably given a hallowed mention
(see Shelemay 2001, p. 5, Cottrell 2004, pp. 4-6, El-Ghabran 2009, pp. 153-54; Malcolmson 2013, p. 115; also Jonathan Stock, 'New Musicologies, Old Musicologies: Ethnomusicology and the Study of Western Music', *Current Musicology* 62 (1997), pp. 40-41; Nicholas Cook, 'We Are All (Ethno)musicologists Now', in *The New (Ethno)musicologies*, edited Henry Stobart (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008), pp. 48-49; Melissa Dobson and Stephanie E. Pitts, 'Classical Cult or Learning Community? Exploring New Audience Members' Social and Musical Responses to First-time Concert Attendance', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20 no. 3 (2011), p. 354; and various others)
- This is another manifestation of hagiographical tendencies, which may reflect wider territorial concerns.

Conclusion

- Musicology which eschews aural engagement is always going to be limited. In some of this work, one could substitute one aural experience for another, without affecting conclusions.
- It is also problematic to automatically privilege spoken over written data.
- Ethnographic approaches have produced much of value, but the over-exalted claims for them over many other established forms of musicology and musicological methods – use of historical knowledge, aural- or score-based analysis, critical reflection on subjects and reception, and so on – do not hold up.
- A parallel dismissal of ethnographic work by other musicologists would be no less petty. All sources of material which can generate knowledge are worth considering.
- No work can do ‘everything’, but a balanced recognition of the limits of various approaches, including traditional ones, would be preferable to turf wars.
- Wolcott (1995): ‘in our enthusiasm for turning a critical eye on everyone else, we have attended rather little to ethnography’s own assumptions and blind spots’ (p. 88).

Plug!

Many of the arguments in today's paper can also be found in more extended form in Ian Pace, 'Ethnographic Approaches to the Study of Western Art Music: Questions of Context, Realism, Evidence, Description and Analysis', and 'When Ethnography Becomes Hagiography: Uncritical Musical Perspectives', in *Researching and Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists: Challenges, Practices, and Complexities*, edited Christopher Wiley and Ian Pace (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 91-148.

