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What Are the Great Discoveries of Your Field? Informal Comments on the Contributions of Ethnomusicology

Kaj so velika odkritja tvojega področja? Neformalni komentarji k prispevkom etnomuzikologije

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IZVLEČEK

Članek je poskus orisa nekaterih glavnih odkritij in prispevkov s področja etnomuzikologije od leta 1885. Vključuje premislek o svetu glasbe, ki ga sestavljajo različne glasbe, izvor glasbe, univerzalije, preučevanje glasbe v kulturi, odnos med kompozicijo in improvizacijo, vprašanje avtentičnosti in uporabi prispevek etnomuzikologije k vzgoji, izobraževanju in družbenemu življenju.

ABSTRACT

This is an attempt to sketch some of the principal discoveries or contributions of the field of ethnomusicology since 1885. These include consideration of the world of music as comprised of musics, the origin of music, universals, the study of music in culture, the relationship of composition and improvisation, the issue of authenticity, and the practical contributions of ethnomusicology to education and social life.

One of the tasks often facing ethnomusicologists is to explain what they are trying to accomplish, and what contributions the people in their field have made - contributions to the world of knowledge. And so I was not totally surprised when a physicist who was my neighbor at a dinner asked me, upon hearing me identify myself, "What are the great discoveries of your field?" I think he, a member of the elites of science, was not trying to be condescending. Rather, I think he was trying, given his own interest in classical chamber music, to get a sense of what I (we) was all about. I had tried to define ethnomusicology as the study of the world's musics, and of music in culture, but he wished, I think to try to define a field by its great discoveries, its major insights, wishing to know what I would provide as counterparts—modest, surely—to relativity or evolution, quantum theory or superconductivity, all of which changed our understanding of the world. For "discoveries" he might have also accepted "contributions" or maybe even "understandings" or "interpretations." I don't think I gave a good spur-of-the-moment answer, but I resolved to think about the question. Have we made a difference in the way people think about music? Aside from our "discovery" of musics not known to the world at large (but of course very familiar to the people who make it), or of exotic instruments such as the didgeridoo, of rare techniques such as multiphonic singing, of unexpected concepts such as the notion that a song is defined not by its sound but by its moment of creation, are there things we have discovered, or interpretations we have made, that changed the understanding of the world of music?

I looked at the record of historical musicology. Music historians would count, as great discoveries, the finding of a cache of unknown works in a trove of Renaissance manuscripts, or interpreting the way a composer's mind worked on the basis of sketches recently discovered. And surely, things we would consider interpretations – who influenced Schubert, why Wagner appealed to nationalists, how did Chopin's improvisations really sound – were important, but whether they should be considered great "discoveries," I'm not sure. But yes, establishing paradigms or accepted methods for looking at the history of music—the concept of periodization, the notion that there is a creative process – these could count as music history's major discoveries, and I guess they did change our basic ideas of the history of music. Similarly, ethnomusicologists have discovered – perhaps it's better to say "reported" – new systems of scale, rhythm, polyphony; new instruments; and new ideas about music held by many people—new to us, that is. Every time you do fieldwork and learn something new (and hope to be able to make a case for its newness in a publication), that counts as a contribution. And all of these seemingly minor discoveries, taken together, would change a person's understanding of the world of music.

One approach to answering my colleague's question might be to cite the totality of ethnomusicology as a contribution. We could say that if ethnomusicology (or whatever else you'd call it) had not come into existence, we – the Western world of academics involved with music, and people who approach music thoughtfully – might have persisted in certain beliefs we have abandoned: for example, that the particular way Western music developed, and sounds, is a human norm, determined by nature; that music is something just to listen to for fun, a kind of chocolate for the ears, and not very important to life; that normal music is melodic and harmonic, with rhythm and percussion instruments less important adjuncts; that it's best to think about music as

a hierarchy, headed by masterworks of great composers, leaving the rest in the background; that the music of other cultures is inferior and has a mindless genesis. I am not sure how good a case I can make for these assertions, but you get my drift: The kinds of things that ethnomusicologists do have significantly expanded our understanding of what the world's music is like.

Well, that's a bit like saying to my physicist colleague that ethnomusicology by its existence made contributions somewhat – very modestly – analogous to the contribution made by the existence of physics. But physicists see their fields as succession of discoveries, as paradigm, some of which might last forever, while others are replaced by advances. Is there something like this in the history of ethnomusicology? Let me suggest a few events that caused us – or ought to have caused us – to look at the world of music differently. But, caveat emptor: After making some contributions, establishing, as it were, paradigms, we have had to reverse ourselves, lay aside beliefs and understandings and theories, substituting new ones. Let me give a short summary of several things I might have told my dinner-partner, of discoveries or contributions of ethnomusicology that may actually have made a difference to people in other fields.

1. THE WORLD OF MUSIC IS ACTUALLY A WORLD OF MUSICS.

This understanding seems to me to be the fundamental epiphany, and it was most significantly stated by Alexander J. Ellis in his famous article of 1885.¹ If what is significant about ethnomusicology is its insistence that the world of music is a group of musics, then Ellis was, I think, the author who first made the belief into a general statement. Of course, earlier scholars knew that Chinese and Indian and African musics were different and interesting. And Ellis was talking only about “scales.” But given the European notion that the most important thing about music was the system and relationship of pitches or tones, Ellis, were he to have written a hundred years later, might have said “musics.” I think that's what he meant. And so the enunciation of a kind of general theory was made by Ellis when he said, “the Musical Scale is not one, not ‘natural’ nor even founded necessarily on the laws of the constitution of human sound...but very diverse, very artificial, very capricious” (p.526). In other words, extending Ellis's thoughts, I believe he meant that musics are created by humans and the results of human choices made on the basis of many aspects of the natural and cultural environment. That understanding – something now quite acceptable, quite obvious to us – seems to me to be the first great discovery of the field that later became ethnomusicology.

2. THE CONCEPT OF MUSIC IS NOT UNIVERSAL.

If this first paradigm was accepted, another one soon appeared, rather gradually, to question or modify it. I'm not sure whether it should count as a discovery, and at best

1 Alexander John Ellis, “On the Musical Scales of Various Nations,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 33 (1885): 485–527.

it may have to be a negative one, such as the determination that acquired traits are not inherited. According to Ellis, the world of music consists of musics; but the question arose, just what is music, and can we identify it when we hear or experience it? Is there such “a” thing as music? Surely, this idea must have occurred to many of the world’s intellectuals and musicians over long periods, but I believe it was the contribution of ethnomusicologists to make clear that it is an issue, and to suggest that if there are discernible boundaries between musics, the existence of a boundary between music and other kinds of sound are at best unclear. The importance of ethnomusicology in the consideration of this issue involves several findings:

The concept of music is in important ways analogous to the concept of language: it is a form of sound communication for which each society (roughly speaking) has its own system, its own grammar, its own musical style, or, if you will, its own “music.” But while we can always readily recognize, and agree, that a person is speaking, whether we understand what is being said or not, in any language, and while we can say that speech is a human universal, the situation is more complex with music. Western Ethnomusicologists are inclined to say that all of the world’s cultures have music, that is, that they have something that sounds to us like music, but this assertion has to be modified in accordance with some incontrovertible findings. For one thing, not all cultures have in their cognitive map a concept analogous to “music” as we know it in Western culture. They may have no term for “music” (although often it has been introduced in the course of westernization), and further, although they do all of the things that we would expect a musical culture to do, they regard the various activities we subsume under “music” as different domains of culture, or they draw the boundary between music and other forms of sound in different places from ours. This may suggest that the various things that comprise “music” for us may have had different origins; for example, choral singing in sounds made by a groups – a tribe, clan, ethnic unity – to frighten enemies or predators²; virtuosic solo performance as a descendant of a kind of sound made by males to impress possible mates with their inventiveness, flexibility, energy; lullabies as descendants of sounds made by mothers to soothe young children; religious chants as coming from a privileged form of communication invented explicitly for addressing supernatural beings and not intelligible to other humans; and so on³. In many of the world’s early societies, these may have coexisted, but only in certain cultures did they become united as the concept of “music.” So it’s important to realize that if we say that all societies have music, this may mean quite different things in one from another.

And then, in Western culture (perhaps others as well): Can we actually define and identify a musical sound? The airplane motor in George Antheil’s “Ballet Mécanique” and the more than four minutes of silence in John Cage’s “4’33”” are obvious and well-known examples. But children reciting nursery rhymes, or a sergeant counting cadence – is that music? People in this culture may disagree. There are many sounds which, if explicitly included in what is labeled as a musical composition, can be accepted as

2 Joseph Jordania, *Tigers, Lions and Humans: History of Rivalry, Conflict, Reverence and Love* (Melbourne: Logos, 2014), 121–167.

3 Nils Wallin, Björn Merker, and Steven Brown, eds., *The Origins of Music* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000; Bruno Nettl, Nettl’s Elephant (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 110–114.

“musical”; but they might not be when produced elsewhere. Indeed, it would seem that the concept of “music” in Western cultures may be best defined by social context – such as the assertion that whether a sound is musical depends on whether one hears it in a concert. (I am jesting, but the principle is serious.)

So, if one paradigm of ethnomusicology is that the world of music consists of distinct musics, a second one is that societies not only differ in the nature of their musical styles, but also in their conception of music, and in the ways in which they classify the world of sound. “Having music” may mean quite a different thing at several levels of conceptualization in different cultures.

If this understanding can be considered a kind of paradigm, a contribution of ethnomusicology, it may be one doesn’t make everyone happy. Or, in denying the fullest measure of music everywhere as a universal, it may contribute to the understanding of the variety of human societies and musical cultures.

3. THE THREE-PART MODEL OF MUSIC PROVIDES A WAY OF COMPREHENDING MUSICAL CULTURES.

Today many of us define ethnomusicology as “the study of music in culture” or less formally, as Jeff Todd Titon has said, “the study of people making music”⁴. But we may also think that this is hardly a distinctive trait of ethnomusicology. Virtually every tradition of writing about music, going back to the ancient Greeks, took an interest in explaining the relationship of music to culture in some sense. And when musicology as a profession was developed⁵, historians of Western music wrote volume after volume relating music to culture, or, as I would prefer to put it, to the rest of culture. For distinguishing ethnomusicologists, then, can we simply say that they place more emphasis to the relationship of music to the other domains of culture? Or can we tease out, from the history of our field, a particular insight or interpretation that may count as a “discovery” or “contribution”? I suggest that this may be Alan Merriam’s model presenting music as consisting of three components, all equally important, always coexisting, and each of them constantly influencing, and also being influenced by, the other two. This model – you know it surely, it consists of ideas about music or “concept,” behavior that results from or leads to or accompanies music, and the music as sound – is relevant to the general understanding of music and culture but in particular it is intended as a kind of guidepost for ethnomusicologists⁶. This contrasts with an approach that studies musical behavior and ideas, but always, and only, with a view to seeing how they affect or determine the “music itself,” how they help us to understand the sound.

Merriam’s model can lead to an understanding that while much of our study still involves trying to see how ideas about music in a culture lead to a particular musical

4 This definition of Titon’s is cited very widely on the internet and in recent publications. One of its first formulations appears in his article, “Knowing Fieldwork,” in Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley, eds., *Shadows in the Field* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 91–92.

5 Guido Adler, “Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1885), 5–20.

6 Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964), 33–35.

style, music is also important in ways that do not concern its function as sound at all. Ideas about music are more than simply the “cultural context of music.” We would not be justified, for example in saying that a book such as Hugo Zemp’s classic *Musique Dan*⁷ is “merely” about cultural context. Allow me an example from my own experience⁸.

The styles of Native American songs are certainly interesting but hardly very complex, and in my experience of the Blackfoot people of Montana, for example, these people themselves didn’t seem to think that the structure of songs was worthy of much attention. To them, Western music—which they called “white” music—now that was complicated music. One had to know a lot to perform it, including reading music and understanding harmony. But white people, some Blackfoot singers told me, didn’t think very deeply about their own music, they only enjoyed its sound.

But the Blackfoot people, I discovered from interviews and observations and older ethnographies and myths, actually had a very complex system of ideas about music which had a role in culture well beyond singing; the concept of song seems to have had an independent existence in speech and thought. For one thing, music was a reflection, a kind of counterpart, of the whole of life. The most important myth about the origins of the Beaver medicine bundle, perhaps the most fundamental ceremony, told how each animal or bird had its own song and its supernatural power. The right way to do something is to sing the right song with it; everything has its song. A man would expand his musical knowledge by having repeated visions in which he learned songs and by moving through a series of age-grade societies, each of which had its songs. The old man, the most respected, was also the one who had learned the most songs. And further, songs are like objects: they can be given, traded, bought, inherited—though just what constitutes the identity of a song is not totally clear—and as a result, it is believed that songs cannot be divided, or changed.

Thus, Merriam’s three-part model of music leads us to a more holistic way of contemplating music as a domain of culture.

4. MUSICAL CREATION IS BEST SEEN AS A LONG CONTINUUM: IMPROVISATION TO COMPOSITION.

I think I must apologize for ethnocentrism here, that is, for using American English as my pint of departure. Webster’s dictionary⁹ defines music as “the science and art of incorporating [tones] into a composition having definite structure and continuity.” Well, I’m not sure whether English-speaking people in any part of the twentieth century would have accepted this, but no doubt for a long time, academics and musicologists divided musical creativity into two categories: proper composition, an art, with notation, as carried out by Beethoven-like figures, and various other ways of making music come about – composition in orally transmitted musics, and improvisation, and related processes – taken together, a kind of craft. The fact that improvisation is taken seriously by scholars

7 Hugo Zemp, *Musique Dan: La musique dans la pensée et la vie sociale d’une société africaine* (Paris: Mouton, 1971).

8 Bruno Nettl, *Blackfoot Musical Thought: Comparative Perspectives* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989).

9 Webster’s Third International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1968).

and educators today is to a large degree a contribution of ethnomusicologists, who undertook to look in detail at cultures in which improvisation is a specialty – for example, jazz, classical musics of South and West Asia, South Slavic epic poetry. So, by the 1960s, it was admitted that there were two easily separable ways of creating music – precomposition and improvisation. I am not sure just when the next paradigm appeared, and whether anyone can be identified as its principal innovator, but I think the next stage in this process has been the understanding that virtually all music is the result to some degree of both of these kinds of music-making. All performances make use of pre-existing material – a score, a memorized song, a set of chord-changes, a set of rules, a type of expected sound; and every performer introduces important personal creative elements. If you wish to quantify, it may not be much in a Beethoven sonata, and it is a great deal in an Indian alap, to give obvious examples; but both elements are always present.¹⁰

5. THE CREATION OF BOUNDARIES, ONCE HELPFUL, IS NO LONGER AN INEFFECTIVE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD'S MUSIC.

Is this a discovery? A contribution? Or a correction? In the second half of the twentieth century, ethnomusicologists abandoned the concept of boundaries as a significant guide to study – boundaries in their own conceptualizations, and boundaries among musics. This is a large area, but one of the important boundary concepts has been the idea of authenticity. Early comparative musicologists, and even more, folk music scholars, were very concerned with authenticity, a term used to denote and distinguish what was truly representative of a culture and had perhaps been there from the beginnings, and was shared by all members of a society. Folk song collectors such as Béla Bartók wished to be sure to find the songs that were the true heritage of the villagers, distinguishing them from recent imports, from influences from a minority, or something concocted by urban composers, or popular music brought from the city.

And so one learned, when ethnomusicology was developed a century or so ago, to seek the authentic music of Africans, Oceania's, European villagers, and Native Americans, not what had developed in recent times as a result of contact with white people. And we learned to avoid popular music, in part because of its commercial basis, but more, I suspect, because it was almost inevitably the result of cultural mixes. Well if you compare that view with ethnomusicology as we see it today, the difference is like night and day. Looking at the programs of conferences, I'm struck by the emphasis on three things: Popular music all over the world, meaning music that is mass-mediated; analysis of how things have changed, what recent developments, how the world's peoples deal with current challenges; and change from the study of unicultural to multicultural venues.

Before about 1950, the normal venue for ethnomusicological and anthropological fieldwork was the village or small tribal society. This was the focus of the early

10 Bruno Nettl, "Thoughts on Improvisation, a Comparative Approach," *Musical Quarterly* 60 (1974): 1–19.

anthropologists doing extensive fieldwork such as Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, A. H. Radcliffe-Brown, and I guess of the earliest collectors of non-Western music. Even the scholars involved with musics that were practiced in urban venues – Indian or Japanese classical traditions, for example – looked at them as isolated phenomena. The model for ethnomusicological contemplation was the village or the small tribal community, or maybe the isolated urban ethnic group, and we thought of musical culture as originally something in which all people shared, of repertoires which were known to all in a small society, of musical contexts known to all. I know I know, that was totally unrealistic, all cultures are far from this pristine kind of society, but I think we tended to regard this as a kind of primordial ideal, a norm, from which many peoples then departed. Well, things have completely turned around in the last fifty years, for me and maybe everybody. The vast majority of studies involved music in which there is significant interaction of cultures, genres, repertoires, styles, and musicians.

6. THERE IS NO SINGLE DETERMINANT OF MUSICAL STYLE.

I come to what I have often considered the central question of ethnomusicology – what is it that determines the musical style, the musical system, or the basic character of the music of a society? I confess that I am not sure whether my colleagues will agree that this is so central; but I have difficulty imagining anyone in my field who has not at various times posed this question – why did *these* people create *this* particular kind of music?

The literature of ethnomusicology, and of musicology at large, is full of explicit statement or suggestions, broad and narrow. Thus: Antiphonal music of the Baroque resulted from the architectural structure of a church in Venice¹¹; but polyphonic music generally resulted from the need of people to make sounds, not in unison, to frighten enemies or predators. Or, the complexity of Western music is a reflection of the proclivity for complex technology. The differences among the world's musics comes from the fact that at one moment in history we find each of them at a different stage of a common development. Or, the musical style of any culture, but its singing style and the general nature of musical sound in particular, result from the typical nature of its social organization and the quality of its interpersonal relationships. The basic style of a music, but the typical size of intervals in particular, result from the relationship of between the sexes and the relative power of each¹². It has been suggested that whether a society develops polyphonic music is genetically determined. Or, it's all a matter of the luck – musical development comes about through the ability and work of born geniuses. The nature of intervals result from the way in which the harmonic series is used or modified by wind instruments naturally discovered. There are plenty of scholars who have given one or another of these alternatives the principal role in determining musical style.

11 See e.g. Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York: Norton, 1947), p. 20–21.

12 See a discussion of various determinants of musical style in Bruno Nettl, "The Whys of World Music: Determinants of Musical Style", in *The Study of Ethnomusicology* 3rd ed., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), Chapter 22.

So what is the contribution of ethnomusicology? Ethnomusicologists have tried to find the implication of Ellis's paradigmatic statement, that musical scales are equal in quality, equally natural or unnatural, diverse and artificial. I believe that if ethnomusicologists have contributed anything it is their not very systematic examination of these alternatives, and their tendency, as a group, to discard each of them as a valid general explanation. If there is a discovery, it is, I believe, that a large number of factors determine the musical of each society. There is no one grail at the end of this ethnomusicological quest. The character of each music is determined, I think we now largely believe, by a number of factors comprising the cultural, natural, intercultural, technological, and biological environments. If this counts as a discovery, it must be one of the discoveries that deny conventional wisdom – we have discovered that something widely is not true or valid.

7. OUR FINDINGS HAVE HAD PRACTICAL RESULTS.

Speaking to ethnomusicologists about the history of the field, I would at some point have to say that the last twenty-five years have been characterized by an important new trend – the development of a number of directions and initiatives which together have been named “applied ethnomusicology.” To my dinner partner, I could also have put it this way: The kinds of things that ethnomusicologists have discovered, have learned, have had some practical results– modest, I don't want to present excessive claims – changing aspects of musical culture, and of other domains of culture. When I began study, about 1950, I was sometimes asked whether my kind of study would do anyone any good. I didn't have a good answer except to say that the accumulation of knowledge was surely a good thing; other replies might have been trivial, such as uncovering music that Western composers could use as inspiration. But now, over a half-century later, it has become clear that what ethnomusicologists have learned can have significant practical benefits of many sorts, and they have been united under the term “applied ethnomusicology” a term at first considered mildly condescending, but eventually seen as deserving dignity and respect.

I cannot summarize comprehensively, but let me mention a few directions¹³. The area receiving the most attention is the relationship of ethnomusicology to music education, broadly defined, which involves several initiatives. There is the presentation of a world of musics to children in each culture, with the purposes of providing a global context for whatever music is the group's own, for broadening horizons, for combating ethnocentrism, and for broadening musical experience; and for showing that all musics, and all human cultures, are worthy of respect and have things to offer. And there is the use of music for the education of minority and immigrant populations, for the education that provides insight into their culture. And in a somewhat different direction, this includes the study of musics of the world in tertiary education via hands-on performance,, all of this coming from the introduction of performance study as part of field research.

¹³ Ibid.

The effect of ethnomusicology in other cultural domains may be less direct, but the point is, I repeat, that the knowledge developed by ethnomusicology has practical uses. These include the use of music in conflict resolution, the protection of intellectual property of non-Western and folk cultures, helping societies in the preservation of traditions by recording, archiving, repatriation, by helping to administer festivals and schools, and by finding ways to ease cultural transitions. Significantly, they include the understanding that music can play a significant role in furthering social justice. And ethnomusicologists have even become involved in ways of saving the environment, as in Titon's concept of "sustainable musical culture"¹⁴ Ethnomusicologists have become involved in fighting cultural impoverishment in many parts of the world. It is important in this context to point out that one of the principal leaders in applied ethnomusicology has been Professor Svanibor Pettan.¹⁵

So, I suppose one of our discoveries is that what we have learned can be of practical benefit.

8. ETHNOMUSICOLOGY AS CRITIQUE.

The final thing I would point out to my colleague: Ethnomusicologists have been the skeptics, the nay-sayers, the people who provide response to ethnocentrism and to facile generalizations, some of them sometimes made by members of other musical disciplines. An important contribution of ethnomusicology has been to contradict and correct the received wisdom of others, their own earlier paradigms, but particularly beliefs that come about through reference to only one culture.

Thus, in important ways, the field of ethnomusicology has at times functioned as a critique of general musicology – or more specifically, historical musicology. A good deal of its rhetoric is presented as response to the typical traditional academic's view of music, contradicting and correcting conventional wisdom and accepted knowledge. When I was a student in the late 1940s, – I was one of only two or three in my institution studying what would later come to be known as ethnomusicology, interacting with a much larger group of music historians – I found myself constantly responding to generalizations about world music (or just plain "music") with contradictions such as like, "yes, but in Central Africa they don't do this," or "it's quite different among the Arapaho." And when confronted with assertions about the specialness of Western music and its theory, I would say, "no, they have something equally complex in India." At that time, if someone had told me that ethnomusicologists were interested in universals, I would have countered by pointing to the specialness of each culture. And in the end, I find myself still espousing this view.

But more than a half-century earlier, the contradiction of conventional wisdom characterized some of the field's earliest publications. A. J. Ellis's epochal article,

¹⁴ Jeff Todd Titon, "Music and the US War on Poverty: Some Reflections." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 45 (2013): 74–82; and Titon, ed., "Special Issue: Ethnomusicology and the Public Interest", *Ethnomusicology* 36, no. 3 (1992).

¹⁵ See for example, Svanibor Pettan, ed., *Music, Politics and War: Views from Croatia* (Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1998).

already cited, of 1885, ends on this kind of a note, telling us what music is not – not natural, not founded on the laws of musical sound, not one thing. A few years later, Carl Stumpf, too tried to correct widely held assumptions. A quotation in a review essay about the earliest publications on Native American and First Nations musics sounds interestingly up to date: “Die indianischen Leitern, wie wir sie bisher kennen, gehören also keineswegs einem ‘archaischen’ oder gar ‘primitiven’ Musikzustand an...Die Beziehung zwischen den Tonauffassungen ganz anderer Art sein, ebenso die psychologische und die historische Entstehungsweise...”¹⁶. Stumpf is asserting that the Indian scales, as we know them at this point, do not belong to an archaic or primitive condition of life. To understand them, one must accept the existence of a great variety of understandings about pitch, and a variety of psychological and historical conceptions of their origin.

Twenty years later, the first article to speak to the special problems and methods of what was called comparative musicology¹⁷, also distances itself from traditional musicology. Three of his points struck me as especially interesting. 1) Hornbostel maintains that comparison is the principal means of scholarly comprehension, and he clearly means neutral and not value-loaded intercultural comparison. This has been an abiding defense of comparative approaches in the face of severe criticism leveled at it since about 1950. 2) Comparative musicologists must broaden their perspective of the kinds of phenomena in music that should be examined, going far beyond “tones” to a great variety of sounds, including those that are intermediate between music and speech, music and noise. Hornbostel, by implication, attacks a narrow conceptualization of music. 3) Music is changing rapidly, and one must “save what can be saved, before airplanes are added to automobile and electric trains, and all of Africa is dominated by tarara-boomdeyay”¹⁸ (Hornbostel 2005: 97), emphasizing the importance of preservation as central to the field but recognizing the need to take change into account.

One would expect the new field of comparative musicology that became ethnomusicology to begin on a positive and optimistic note, but actually, both Stumpf and Hornbostel sound a bit pessimistic. Their contrasts with that of the enormously influential earlier article of 1885 by Guido Adler that lays out the discipline of musicology – centered on historical study of European music – in a positive and optimistic mood, seeing a process of consistent progress towards a clear goal, “Jeder Schritt, zu dem Ziele [Lösung grosser wissenschaftlicher Aufgaben] führt, jede That, die uns ihm näher rückt bedeutet einen Fortschritt menschlicher Erkenntnis.” [Each step that moves us closer to our scholarly musicological goals signifies progress in our understanding as human beings]¹⁹. In contrast to Ellis and Hornbostel, Adler wants to look forward and does not complain that his earlier colleagues had been on the wrong track.

16 Carl Stumpf, “Phonographierte indianische Melodien,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 8 (1892): 127–44. See p. 142.

17 Erich M. von Hornbostel, “Die Probleme der vergleichenden Musikwissenschaft.” *Zeitschrift der internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 7, no. 1, 85–97, 1904–5.

18 Hornbostel, “Die Probleme ...”, 97

19 Adler, “Umfang, Methode und Ziel ...”, 20.

POVZETEK

Kolega, ki pri večerji sedi z mano za mizo, je verjetno slišal že dovolj, tebe pa, dragi bralec, najbrž ni bilo potrebno prepričevati o pomenu etnomuzikologije. Vendar pa mi, ki delamo na tem področju, sebe običajno definiramo s tem, kar počnemo – raziskujemo na primer vlogo glasbe v kulturi, proučujemo glasbo z antropološke perspektive, izvajamo raziskave o različnih glasbah v ustnem izročilu in preiskujemo glasbo izven okvira zahodne klasične glasbe. Take in podobne stvari govorimo

svetu. Smiselno je, da tudi naše področje definiramo s tem, kar je doseglo, z njegovimi dosežki ali, kot se je izrazil moj kolega fizik, z velikimi odkritji, do katerih smo prišli. Težko se je primerjati s fiziko, ki si prizadeva razložiti celovitost vesolja ali z raziskavami v medicini, ki nas ohranjajo pri življenju. Vendar se mi zdi upravičeno trditi, da so stvari, ki so jih etnomuzikologi naredili in odkrili, sprožile pomembne spremembe v glasbenih kulturah sveta. Brez njihovega doprinosa bi bili danes morda svet glasbe, glasbene prakse, glasbena vzgoja in glasbena misel svetovnih kultur precej drugačni.