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Introduction

Popular Musics: A Challenge for Ethnomusicology?

If ethnomusicology is primarily defined by its research methods rather than by focusing on certain conventional objects of study labeled as “traditional” musics, an ethnomusicologically informed investigation of popular musics might yield new insights into phenomena that have so far been approached mainly from other perspectives, such as music sociology or the study of popular culture in general. If the study of popular musics is viewed as legitimate and necessary for contemporary ethnomusicology does it present any specific challenges? Are there substantial differences between Western and non-Western popular musics that would affect research questions and/or methodology? This introduction will trace some of the issues involved.

1) Popular musics as study objects of ethnomusicological research

25 years ago, in 1988, Peter Manuel published his pioneering introduction to *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World*. It clearly demonstrates the significant change in the development of ethnomusicology during the 20th century. Some 30 years earlier Jaap Kunst in his famous publication that established the new designation of our field, ethnomusicology, considered the study of popular music not to belong to its tasks:

"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." (Kunst 1959:1; italics in the original)

After Kunst's designation, a paradigmatic change gradually took place, as apparent in Bruno Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (1983). Instead of drawing on the objects of study, i.e. traditional musics outside of Western art

music, he defined the field primarily by its approach and research methods and demanded that ethnomusicologists study “all of the world’s music,” “as a part of culture,” and based on fieldwork (Nettl 1983:9). Beyond this claim, however, it still took some time before the first studies in the domain of popular musics were actually carried out (cf. Nettl 2005:187). Early examples are Nettl’s *Eight Urban Musical Cultures* (1978), David Coplan’s *In Township Tonight: South Africa’s Black City Music and Theatre* (1985) as well as Ruth Finnegan’s *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town* (2007, 1st ed. 1989), a study of amateur musicians in the English town Milton Keynes. In 1990 Christopher Waterman published his often cited book on Nigerian *jùjú* music (Waterman 1990) and as early as 1982 John Collins and Paul Richards discussed in their paper entitled “Popular Music in West Africa – Suggestions for an Interpretative Framework” (Collins & Richards 1982) the then current theories of culture contact, such as Melville Herskovits’ model of acculturation and its implications which include the notions of syncretism, borrowings and retentions as well as so-called neo-traditional music. The first issue of the new scholarly journal *Popular Music*, which has repeatedly published contributions by ethnomusicologists, appeared in 1981.¹

During the 1980s and 1990s the study of non-Western popular musics eventually started to gain momentum and resulted not only in a considerable number of articles on relevant issues (cf. for instance Martin 1982, Malamusi 1984, Skillman 1986, Witmer 1987, Graebner 1989, Rörich 1989, Meintjes 1990, Erlmann 1991a and b, Garofalo 1993, Schmidt 1994, Erlmann 1998) but also, especially during the latter decade, in several book-length works covering a wide range of different localities and topics (cf. for instance Guilbault 1993a, Manuel 1993, Averill 1997, Lockard 1998).

The notion that ethnomusicology is primarily characterized by its approach and its methods is now widely accepted (see e.g. Stobart 2008:3; Nettl 2005:9-10). Therefore, since there are basically no reasons to exclude certain types of music from our investigation, one would expect to find popular musics as regular topics of ethnomusicological research. Indeed, examples such as Paul Berliner’s *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994) and Ingrid Monson’s *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (1996) have

¹ In the first volume there was an article by Gerhard Kubik, in later ones contributions by David Coplan, Veit Erlmann, and others.

demonstrated convincingly how enlightening an ethnomusicological approach to jazz can be, thus giving jazz research a new direction (cf. Grupe 2009). Various studies on Western art music have corroborated this (see further Nettl 2005:242, 190-191). So why not apply this particular perspective to popular musics as well?

2) Definition and scope of the term *popular music*

What, in fact, is popular music in the first place? Coplan, in his study mentioned above (1985), distinguishes between “urban music” and “traditional”. The former “includes any style developed in a city and in response to urban residence, i.e. of the city, not merely in the city”, while the latter comprises “forms created in rural areas with no perceptible Western influence or considered by members of the culture to be indigenous” (Coplan 1985:vii). Peter Manuel draws on criteria developed by Bruno Nettl when listing the following: “mass media, urban, professional musicians (but not highly trained), stylistic relationship to the art music of its culture” (1988:2). Richard Middleton, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001:128), identifies as common approaches – albeit certain “methodological difficulties” – popularity in the sense of large audiences and wide acceptance² and the dissemination by means of mass media as main features. The question whether this kind of music is made by or made for a certain social class of people in a given society (Middleton calls these scenarios “bottom-up” and “top-down” respectively) has a parallel in the controversy between Josef Pommer and John Meier at the beginning of the 20th century regarding the nature of German folk songs.³ According to Middleton (2001:129) there are no universal structural or socio-cultural features that apply to any popular music in general. Rather, this term serves as a discursive tool in specific historical and social contexts. Manuel

² In German a distinction can be made between “Populärmusik” (popular music as distinguishable from art music or other such categories) and “populäre Musik” (music that is widely disseminated and accepted).

³ Josef Pommer argued that folk songs are made by the “folk” (so-called “Produktionstheorie” or production theory), while John Meier posited that any music taken up by the “folk” should be termed “folk music” (so-called “Rezeptionstheorie” or reception theory; cf. Schepping 2000:647).

underscores the relevance of the dissemination through mass media (2001:153) in particular since studio productions tend to show an increasing degree of specific aesthetics and technology. He stresses the notion of popular music as a commodity and its focus on stars (2001:154).

3) World music, world beat, ethno-pop

In German the term “Weltmusik” (world music) is particularly problematic, since two different meanings are current. The music industry including record shops and the like subsumes all kinds of musics under this label that do not fit into the categories of Western “classical” or rock/pop music. The term thus encompasses genres as diverse as various Asian art music traditions (e.g. Hindustani music, Chinese opera, *gagaku*) as well as urban musics from Africa (e.g. *soukous*, *mbalax*) or the Caribbean (e.g. *son*, *salsa*, *reggae*), but also – if at all represented in a shop – local musics from various parts of the world. On the other hand, “Weltmusik” is sometimes meant to denote what in English is often termed “world beat”: popular musics from around the world. An entry entitled “world music” in the German dictionary *Handbuch der populären Musik* (Wicke et al. 1997) confirms the wide range of phenomena that are covered by this notion. They include local styles in African and Asian countries, derivatives of Western pop in the non-Western sphere, and also synthetic products consisting of ingredients from different traditions and cultures.

Manuel maintains that the musical style rather than geographical locations are more important in distinguishing between Western and non-Western popular musics. For him any genre outside the Anglo-American mainstream is “non-Western” (1988:vi) but the nature of genres such as *tango argentino*, Portuguese *fado*, Spanish *flamenco*, and also *salsa* and *reggae* is, of course, debatable. On the whole, he considers terms such as “world music,” “world beat,” “ethnopolop” and so on as inappropriate because of their indistinct nature and asserts “terminological challenges” as a result of the increasing blurring of “the dichotomy of Western and non-Western world musics” (2001:153). Jocelyne Guilbault uses the terms “world music” and “world beat” interchangeably for “popular musics that [...] are mass distributed worldwide and yet associated with minority groups and small or industrially developing countries, that combine local musical characteristics with those of mainstream genres in today’s

transnational music-related industry, and that have reached markets of industrialized countries.” (2003a:233) and stresses their “ambiguous” nature and “multifaceted meanings” (Guilbault 1993b:36).

The Western influence in such new genres is generally acknowledged, but may be difficult to pinpoint exactly in any given case. Usually the adoption of musical instruments typically used in Western pop music is considered to be a central feature. However, as the case of classical music in North and South India demonstrates, Westernization and modernization should not be mixed up and simply treated as one and the same. Although the use of the European violin, the harmonium (cf. Grupe 2004:98-101), and the saxophone (cf. CD Gopalnath: *Gem Tones*) has not led to any substantial changes in the performance practice of these traditions it, nevertheless, constitutes a Western influence on Hindustani and Carnatic music. However, subsuming them under the category of “world beat” would be obviously misleading. From the point of view of local audiences – and also from an analytical perspective – as classical idioms they are clearly set apart from popular genres such as the *filmi* music of Bollywood movies, unless a conscious effort is made by the artists to create something decisively different (cf. CD Mahanthappa: *Kinsmen*). Whether the introduction of drum computers in *fiiji* music (cf. LP Alasela: *Sikisiki aya e, ko fi kan mi*), at one time the most popular genre among the Yoruba in Nigeria, has led to any musical changes within this idiom apart from the use of new technology remains to be investigated. The example of Nigerian *jùjú* will be briefly discussed below.

Sarah Weiss chooses a different feature to establish “world beat” as an analytical category. For her it is essential that performers of “world beat” and their audience usually do not belong to the same ethnic groups (Weiss 2012). Without explicitly stating it, this idea is also present in the way the term “world music” is understood by Simha Arom and Denis-Constant Martin. In their contribution to the edited volume *Analytical and Cross-Cultural Studies in World Music* by Michael Tenzer and John Roeder entitled “Combining Sounds to Reinvent the World: World Music, Sociology, and Musical Analysis” (Arom & Martin 2011) they differentiate between two kinds of “world music”: so-called recycled and so-called synthetic musics. The former are those genres, which existed before the new label “world music” was introduced for commercial reasons and are now presented under this new umbrella term (again). The latter term is used for newly created music that is characterized by combining musical elements of various geographic origins and studio production

techniques and arrangements. Sometimes the label “crossover” is employed for such projects (see below).

As a general observation it may be pointed out that we are dealing with discursive rather than analytical terms here. It seems impossible to exactly define “world beat,” “world music,” or “non-Western popular music.” Peter Manuel’s pragmatic stance, which simply calls any popular music outside of the Western mainstream “non-Western,” stands to reason when considering the historic development in the 20th century, because most genres that he embraces under this term have come to the attention of a wider (Western) audience only late during that century. However, the question remains whether the distinction between “Western” and “non-Western” popular musics is appropriate at all in the light of current debates regarding the implications of the construction of the “other”. Furthermore, Manuel’s differentiation rather points to the fact that any such boundaries run straight through the Western countries themselves. After all, which countries are “Western,” anyway? Where does the “Western” part of Europe end? Which part of the Americas can be called “Western”? This is an especially crucial question when it comes to genres such as *flamenco* or *fado*, which Manuel calls “non-Western” but are located in European countries. While some scholars, among them Arom and Martin (2011), favor a distinction between the “North” and the “South” rather than between “Western” and “non-Western,” this also does not lead to any consistent result: just think of Siberia or Mongolia (“North”?) and Australia (“South”?). The notion of a discursive nature of such terms, in this case geographical ones applied to express cultural, political, and economic differences, is clearly evident here. At the same time, power relations, the economic potential of the people involved, and the uneven distribution of access to modern technology need to be taken into account (cf. Wallis & Malm 1984; Garofalo 1993).

4) Popular musics: visibility and target groups

In any case it seems advisable to speak of popular musics in the plural form in order to underscore the differences of the specific genres designated by this category. A crucial factor in this respect is what Mark Slobin (1992:7) has called the visibility of musical products. While some genres such as the German popular music genre *Schlager* or the *fùjì* music of the Yoruba in Nigeria are

popular only on the local level, i.e. in a geographically restricted area, some like Indian *filmi* music or Congolese guitar music get attention on a larger scale, and in some instances there is a transnational presence, as is the case with genres such as *salsa*, *reggae*, *tango*, hip-hop and others. By presence I do not mean a mere listening to, the only passive consuming of foreign musics, but rather their active adoption and performance. Particularly transnationally disseminated styles may be “localized,” i.e. demonstrate a local color or flavor, by employing vernacular languages in their lyrics or by incorporating musical features from local musics. In this context, musical productions aimed at specific target groups usually take different expectations of different audiences into account. Thus, the Senegalese singer Youssou N’Dour has sung in English and French instead of Wolof for the international market (Broughton et al. 1999:622) and the *qawwālī* star Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan gave preference to musical aspects of his performance rather than textual nuances when performing for an audience in Paris (cf. Grupe 2010), most of whom were not capable of understanding Farsi or Urdu and could not appreciate the concept of *gīrah* which is at the heart of a traditional *qawwālī* performance (cf. Qureshi 1995:22, 237).

5) Research questions and issues from an ethnomusicological perspective

Which issues are relevant for an ethnomusicologically informed study of popular musics and how does this become evident in scholarly publications?

Music and identity

In reviewing trends in the development of ethnomusicology Bruno Nettl (2005:247) has stated that: “Increasingly, in the history of ethnomusicology after around 1970, the issue of identity [...] takes on significance as the main function of music.” And he continues:

“The [ethnomusicological, G.G.] books of the nineties and later increasingly emphasize various kinds of relationships among groups of people – gender issues, power relations, interaction of socio-economic classes, music in political movements, all perhaps related to the matter of identity – national, ethnic, class, gender, personal.” (Nettl 2005:255)

As I have discussed elsewhere (Grupe 2011) the potential for expressing the identity of modern, urban people in a globalized world seems to rest heavily on popular musics which appear to be better vehicles for the required fusion of modernity and locality than classical traditions. Thus, the issue of music as a marker of identity is a central topic of many ethnomusicological studies on popular musics (cf. Austerlitz 1997; Mitchell 1996; Stokes 1994).

Tradition and modernity

Without doubt the phenomenon of local color constitutes a central element in the dialectical relationship between two contradicting requirements, because the music in question shall serve two aims. On the one hand it is expected to establish a connection to modernity, to current trends often initiated in Western countries. On the other hand music can only fulfill its role to mark identity in countries different from where the genre stems from, if the local audiences perceive a connection to their own cultural identity – unless people want to present themselves as outright cosmopolitan (cf. Turino 2000) and prefer to favor a transnational music without noticeable color (such as Western art music among certain segments of the society in Asian countries). Eric Charry has demonstrated this connectedness of tradition and modernity in his book *Mande Music* (2000) in an exemplary fashion. If a local cover band in Zimbabwe performs an American hit, only one side of this medal is involved. If, however, traditional local music, such as the one usually played on *mbira* lamellophones of the Shona people, is combined with musical instruments such as electric guitars and drum set typically found in Western pop music ensembles, a new idiom of popular music may evolve, in this case the *chimurenga* style, which can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. The *mbira* as an emblem of traditional Shona culture is linked to (Western) modernity in the context of a new urban music that may even appeal to Western audiences and can be presented on stages in Europe or North America. In order to be able to demonstrate how this blend works it is first necessary to thoroughly understand traditional *mbira* music. Only then can musical analyses show the changes, adaptations, and new developments that have resulted from the creation of the new genre. Musical analysis, sociological, psychological, and political issues all play a part in this endeavor. Beginning in the 1990s, a substantial number of in-

depth studies dealing with the issue of tradition and modernity in various ways have been published (cf. for instance Galinsky 2002; Stokes 1992, 2010; Turino 2000).

These kinds of new genres should be distinguished from what I would call crossover experiments. In this kind of “world music” musicians from countries, as different as possible, perform together to create something that has yet to be heard. These projects beg the question – and this is true of any newly developed genre – who the cultural bearers are, i.e. who will judge their success or failure. Very often, it will for the most part not be audiences or musical experts from the countries where the musicians involved come from as has been shown by Martin Pfleiderer concerning the concert series *Jazz Meets the World* organized by the music journalist Joachim Ernst Berendt in the 1960s and 70s and similar events (Pfleiderer 1998).

Hybridity

At first, the various models regarding cultural contacts and changes mainly stemmed from the field of Afro-American studies and in particular Melville Herskovits’ study on acculturation (Herskovits 1938). Later, new approaches tried to expand or reassess established theories and introduced several neologisms. One case in point is the notion of so-called “neo-traditional” music (Kubik 1981), referring to intermediate forms that could not easily be classified as either “traditional” or “modern” styles. However, such developments can only be considered to be transitional stages. Either the innovation is accepted as “traditional” in the course of time and thus, represents the result of a “natural” process of change that can be interpreted as a gradual transformation and probably modernization of a given tradition, or the new idiom may display an obvious dynamic towards popular musics combined with a functional change of the (new) genre as compared to its predecessor(s). Kubik who promoted the term “neo-traditional” for some time later dropped it without great ado and it has disappeared in current publications.

The terminology directly related to Herskovits’ acculturation model including concepts such as “syncretism”, which mainly used to be applied to the religious sphere, is also not used much anymore (cf. Grupe 2006 for a review of various other approaches). Another term, hybridity, relating to the same basic issue as

syncretism, namely the blending of different elements and ingredients combined with reinterpretations and adaptations, has replaced it today. Surprisingly, this term appeared in ethnomusicological writings long before it gained the status of a current *topos* in this field in recent years. In fact it was Jaap Kunst who, in 1959, wrote that ethnomusicology “studies as well the sociological aspects of music, as the phenomena of musical acculturation, i.e. the hybridizing influence of alien musical elements” (1959:1). The anthropologist Brian Stross talks about so-called “hybridity cycles”⁴. According to him, styles that once were new grow old and become traditional over time, while undergoing changes (Stross 1999). This may be applied to rock music, which is characterized by various trends and styles that follow one after another historically, yet some keep being practiced as the newer ones have already been introduced. It is expected that they will undergo changes in this process as Stross predicts. Carol Silverman rightly remarked (Silverman 2012:42) that there is a certain weakness in the concept of hybridity because any music is subjected to external influences that may invoke changes. It is mainly a matter of the extent and the speed of these processes; the notion of a music completely unaffected by others seems rather erroneous. Still it would be interesting at least regarding the formational phase of the new idiom to investigate which sources contributed to its development. The hybrid character is likely to lose relevance in the course of time and more and more the new genre will be perceived as one in its own right. Afro-Caribbean musics are a case in point. First seen as remnants (“survivals and retentions”) of a more or less lost African past or heritage, they were later interpreted as new autonomous Caribbean musics (cf. Mintz & Price 1976, Grupe 2006).

When looking at how new popular musics have emerged and which transformational processes have been involved, there seems to be a general, seemingly contradictory trend to combine modernization with an explicit reference to one’s own tradition. Christopher Waterman (1990) has very successfully demonstrated this dialectical relationship of modernization and indigenization in his study on the *jùjú* music of the Yoruba people in Nigeria. While in some earlier recordings the electric guitars can be heard adopting typical blues “licks” (stereotyped melodic phrases), their melodic style is much more independent and innovative on later records (cf. Grupe 2001). In addition,

⁴ I would like to thank Sarah Weiss for bringing this to my attention.

new musical instruments were introduced, among them traditional talking drums that are at the heart of traditional Yoruba culture (Waterman 1990:82-86).

Such obvious links to tradition may however, not be adequately decipherable for Western audiences who will not be able to tell the difference between a musical pattern played on a talking drum and a drum which is actually saying something. Another case of misinterpretations can be exemplified by ensembles that only seemingly employ musical instruments and other attributes of their tradition. During the 1990s Shona singer and *mbira* player Stella Chiweshe from Zimbabwe toured Europe with an ensemble including *marimbas*, which are indigenous instruments for some ethnic groups in Africa but not for the Shona, and band members dressed in semi-“African” style, which also had no traditional roots in Shona culture. Of course, it is perfectly justified to include such instruments and to wear any kind of stage dress the artists prefer. The audience, due to a lack of background information, might be misled however, into interpreting the presentation as being more “traditional” than actually is the case.

Musical analysis

This underscores not only the need for such background information on behalf of audiences, unless they are content with a merely intuitive listening experience. Moreover, it demonstrates the necessity of musical analysis. In the case of popular musics we are aware that this may present certain problems, which need to be tackled; for instance the fact that musical parameters other than the common “classical” ones, such as pitch and duration, may be as important for the musical idiom under investigation. These may include among others timbre, the purposeful use of non-harmonic spectral components, and microtonal inflections. How to deal with the sound modulations of an electric guitar? Just notating the pitches in a rhythmically correct way would represent only part of the actual performance – as is of course always the case with any transcription. However, in this case we might omit one or more parameters which may be as central to this music as the pitches and rhythms, if not more. These considerations are usually given as reasons for a general lack of musical analyses in the realm of popular music studies. Peter Wicke (2003) has been one of the proponents of an approach which is also musicological, not merely

sociological in the study of Western popular music; but this has rarely been put to practice, not only because of the problems outlined above, but also due to a strong influence of cultural studies which led to substantial skepticism regarding “technical” analyses of musical performances.

These issues are certainly not at all new to ethnomusicologists who are quite familiar with discussions on the relevance of musical analyses and with musical features and performance practices that transcend Western standards. Just think of the practice of overtone singing from Central Asia, the playing of musical bows such as the Brazilian *berimbau*, the customary use of rattling and other devices attached to musical instruments to add color to their sound as is often the case particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, scales with a certain range of intonation for each scale degree, and specific combinations of tuning and spectral characteristics as in the Central Javanese concept of *embat* which determines the overall sound of the *gamelan* orchestras. Is it at all feasible to analyze this kind of music – or any other kind, for that matter – without additional information? Current ethnomusicology would have strong doubts about such an approach. It is all the more surprising that Simha Arom in his contribution with Denis-Constant Martin to the edited volume on *Analytical and Cross-Cultural Studies in World Music* (Tenzer & Roeder 2011), obviously a project with a foundation in ethnomusicology, attempts to do just that. His chosen method of looking for musical parameters in seven selected listening examples that he considers representative of so-called “synthetic” world music has a parallel in Erich von Hornbostel’s so-called “phonographic method” that he propagated at the beginning of the 20th century, in that both scholars deliberately forego any contextual information regarding the musical samples. While Hornbostel had no other choice at that time as long as he stuck to his then accepted “armchair approach” (cf. Grupe 1998), it would have been easy enough for Arom today to gather useful information about the musicians and their musical backgrounds involved in the recordings he wanted to analyze.

Instead of such an outdated approach we strive today for what Bruno Nettl in the blurb to Tenzer’s first volume of *Analytical Studies* (2006) has called “culturally informed analysis”. Carol Silverman’s study on Roma music in Bulgaria and New York (Silverman 2012) offers a vivid example of how specific musical features are intertwined with other issues related to music, such as musical hybridity, construction of identities through music, its role among minorities, the relationship between pop and tradition, and much more. Thus, an

in-depth analysis of musical characteristics appears to be indispensable for any serious understanding of these issues. Another case in point is Regula Qureshi's investigation of the *qawwālī* music of Sufi communities in North India and Pakistan (Qureshi 1995). How this originally purely religious genre of Muslim mystics could have attained the status of entertainment music popular outside the circles of Muslim devotees and even serving as an ingredient of crossover world music projects can be explained on the basis of an analysis of its lyrics and musical features (cf. Grupe 2010).

Notation and visualization

In this context it seems advisable to consider alternative forms of notation in order to visualize the findings of our research. Should we present everything in staff notation in order to avoid an "othering" of the musics we study (cf. Agawu 1995)? Or should we choose a format that is more appropriate to each music's specific traits, rather than conventional staff notation developed specifically for Western art music (cf. Grupe 2005)? Usually in ethnomusicological studies on popular musics only slightly modified versions of Western music notation can be found, other systems have not found general acceptance so far.

Gender issues

Another question to be dealt with is how music plays a part in the social construction of gender roles. This has been addressed in several studies on traditional musics, usually with a focus on women and music (cf. Koskoff 1989), but sometimes also in the context of popular musics (cf. Baranovitch 2003). Java shows some interesting aspects and trends in this respect. In former times, the part of the female solo singer in a classical *gamelan* orchestra used to be musically and economically on a par with the other ones in the ensemble. Nowadays, she tends to be the featured soloist accompanied by men. This is evident both in the use of microphones and considerably higher salaries than those of the other musicians. This change is also reflected in local popular music genres with a certain affinity to traditional gamelan music. On the other hand, some female pop singers, and to a certain extent even classical singers

(*pesindhèn*), are viewed as continuing the role of traditional dancers (*talèdhèk* or *ronggèng*) who used to dance for men for payment and thus came close to women with a doubtful moral status (cf. Sutton 1989). Another case is the evolution of all-female *gamelan beleganjur* ensembles, a Balinese genre originally reserved for accompanying processions that today has grown into highly popular events where various troupes compete in public performances (cf. Bakan 1998). Here again it is obviously indispensable to be aware of local traditions if we want to really understand phenomena from the domain of popular culture.

Stars and biographical research

In the context of popular culture it is commonplace to explore famous protagonists or stars. However, serious research cannot result in affirmative portraits of iconic figures that represent a certain genre or in supplying encyclopedic lists of biographical or discographical data. Rather, the aim should be to try to explain the success of certain artists including a detailed analysis of their personal musical performance style. As Jonathan Stock as recently remarked, studies on individual artists have come to be an important undertaking in ethnomusicology (Stock 2008; see also Ruskin & Rice 2012). One often cited example is Virginia Danielson's remarkable book on the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthūm (Danielson 1997) based on written sources, reminiscences of the artist's contemporaries, and participant observation (cf. also the more recent study on Kulthūm by Lohman 2010 and Leu 2006 on Brazilian artist Caetano Veloso).

6) Research methods

Does ethnomusicology lose the object of its studies in the wake of globalization? Do migration and the ever faster flow of information around the world via electronic media lead to the dissolution of distinguishable traditions and cultures or at least to ones that can no longer be clearly defined geographically? If so, what kind of consequences do we face regarding our primary means of data collecting, namely participant observation? Is this method only suitable for small-scale communities and does not fit urban phenomena, because "today's

cultural practices cannot be bound any longer to a single territory”, as Julio Mendivil (2008:67; translation G.G.) remarked in his study on German *Schlager*, bringing to mind Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “deterritorialization” (1996:49)? According to Mendivil popular music as a “multilocal” practice defies conventional field research, which is suitable only in the case of “pastoral” topics and a “micro-sociological” view (2008:68; also see his contribution in the present volume where he clarifies his position). Furthermore, he views music production in recording studios and the practice of using playbacks during live performances as evidence for the virtual nature of the resulting product that cannot be attributed to one specific location: *Schlager* is “nomadic” (2008:69-72). It is not possible to exactly delineate where the product is consumed, be it in a concert hall, on TV in a living room, on an MP3 player on the road or elsewhere. In addition, he considers it especially challenging that major agents such as producers, managers, and sound engineers are not willing to give away too much of their specific knowledge and rather keep their professional secrets to themselves. While it is possible for a researcher to attend public shows it seems rather problematic to sit on a couch next to somebody watching the same show on TV in his/her living room. Jonathan Stock (2008:200) also differentiates between how to deal with experts who work in a music-related profession in an urban environment, where more formal interview techniques may be applied, as compared to other situations where a researcher would take part in the daily life of people by employing participant observation.

Do we need to conclude that conventional participant observation is outdated, even “dead”? If we assume it means – as it is usually understood – to take part in the daily life of the people we observe and especially focus our observations on musical or music-related activities in an “observer as participant” fashion (cf. Myers 1992:29) including taking note of verbal or other responses of local people to or during these activities, this can definitely be applied to the study of popular musics. We may attend concerts and talk to members of the audience, we may try to be present during rehearsals or even in the recording studio and talk to the musicians. We may even consider joining them in performances if possible. In addition, we may lead expert interviews with producers, managers, and media people. Christopher Washburne (1999) did all that during his research on *salsa* musicians in New York and has thereby proven that, even in a setting of urban professional musicians, participant observation may be successfully employed.

Regarding taking part in the daily life of people, participant observation surely does not necessarily imply being adopted as a family member. Even in research on traditional musics, a number of cases have been reported where considerable patience on behalf of the researcher was required in order to finally receive certain vital information from the informants. A well-known example is Paul Berliner's attempt to get an explanation of the Shona tonal system and tuning concepts underlying *mbira* music from the musicians (Berliner 1981:1-7).

The question whether ethnographic methods are suitable and practical for research on urban or popular musics has of course obvious consequences for so-called musical ethnographies (cf. Nettl 2005:234). Is this type of monographic study restricted to small-scale, remote communities as Steven Feld's *Sound and Sentiment* (1978) and Anthony Seeger's *Why Suyá Sing* (1987) might lead us to assume? Chris Waterman's *Jijú: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*, for instance, claims to be a musical ethnography, too: "a book about the relationship of music, identity, and power in a modernizing African society" (Waterman 1990:1). At the same it corroborates the notion that participant observation may be successfully applied in such an environment.

7) Ethnomusicology and popular music studies revisited

Many, if not all questions that come up in the study of urban musics seem to concern issues quite current in ethnomusicology. Might, therefore, any kind of popular music research profit from an ethnomusicological approach and the use of ethnography? In his book *Studying Popular Music*, Richard Middleton (1990:146-154) showed considerable reserve towards ethnomusicology, probably because he was not aware of current ethnomusicological theory at that time. This can be inferred from the fact that he, to a great extent, focused on rather old publications and indeed assumed that "most ethnomusicologists study the music of 'primitive' societies, of the oriental high cultures and of 'folk' cultures; popular music, let alone Western 'art' music, has hardly been touched (though see Finnegan 1989)" (1990:146; on Finnegan see above). Peter Manuel's *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (1988) is mentioned only in a footnote. Yet, there have been examples of ethnographic methods being successfully employed in studies on Western popular music even in the early 1990s, for instance Sara Cohen's (1991) investigation of rock music in

Liverpool (cf. also Cohen 1993). Lately, the renowned Danish popular music scholar Fabian Holt has actually stated an “affinity of recent popular music research to ethnographic discourse” (2008:40) and particularly referred to Simon Frith’s *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (1996) und Richard Middleton’s edited volume *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* (2000). Thus, even “conventional” popular music studies dealing solely with Western pop styles might profit from securing an empirical basis of their investigations (cf. Bennett 2002) beyond mere “fan scholarship” (cf. Middleton 1993:180 on the, in his opinion, “vital role” of the “scholar-fan”).

8) The papers in this volume

In one way or another, the issues that have been outlined here are also addressed in the ten contributions following this introduction. The respective authors draw on their extensive experience with various musical cultures of the world, from which they take their examples to illustrate and discuss more general theoretical questions.

Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann discusses Tagg’s famous article from 1982 and gives an answer to the question why this dated paper is still often quoted among compulsory reading on popular music studies. Both by a theoretical critique and by examining one specific example, an *afro-samba* piece, where she draws on her extensive experience with Brazilian musics, she demonstrates why Tagg’s approach should rather not serve as a model for the analysis of popular musics.

Raymond Ammann, who has carried out research in Vanuatu for many years, argues in favor of specific methods that should be developed for each popular music genre, taking into account the often very divergent cultural settings. He identifies the popularity regarding wide acceptance and own performance practice of local string band music as a distinguishing feature, as opposed to other imported popular musics such as rap or *reggae* which are appreciated only by smaller segments of Vanuatu society.

Klaus-Peter Brenner’s contribution goes well beyond the size of the other papers in this volume. It is an in-depth musical analysis of one piece from the repertoire of Shona *mbira* music and compares various renditions performed in traditional settings as well as in the context of *chimurenga* popular music of Zimbabwe. By supplying extensive musical examples and charts, the author is

able to visualize how a traditional piece has been adapted into an urban style utilizing typical musical instruments such as electric guitars in addition to or replacing the traditional *mbira* lamellophones. The paper lucidly demonstrates what can be achieved by a culturally informed analysis based on profound knowledge of the local performance practice and its guiding principles.

Anja Brunner, in her analysis of a Cameroonian guitar music genre, questions the simple dichotomy of “traditional” vs. “modern” and interprets new developments as an “extension” of local musical practices that, although making use of Western technical equipment and still associated with a particular ethnic identity, are “ethnically coded”. As her paper demonstrates, a thorough understanding of such developments depends on successfully disclosing their cultural and musical basis in local traditional practices.

Dietmar Elflein traces the intricate networks of artists and producers who shaped the disco sound in West Germany during the 1970s and 80s in their relationship to other musical trends in German popular music at that time such as *Schlager* and *Krautrock* as well as to American popular genres.

Nils Grosch looks into the rise of the German folksong phenomenon and convincingly deconstructs notions of folksong as the seemingly “real thing” versus popular music as a mass-mediated, “trivial,” and “inauthentic” commodity. He shows the importance of media early on in the history of the folksong movement and emphasizes the conception of all kinds of music “as forms of cultural staging” where various media always play a central role.

Julio Mendiivil, as does Sharif (see below), stresses the importance of the “consumer perspective” in popular music studies. His main focus, however, drawing on his own experience with two different genres, German *Schlager* and Brazilian *música sertaneja*, is to endorse ethnographic methods in research on popular musics. He also points out the impact that studies of popular musics have had on ethnomusicology.

Applying transculturation theories on the relationship between British and US pop music, **Andreas Meyer** investigates their mutual influences during the 1960s, by exemplarily looking at a song by *The Kinks* which serves to demonstrate how popular music studies could profit from an approach founded on concepts of culture contact originally developed by Fernando Ortíz and refined later by others.

Babak Nikzat’s paper presents some of his findings on a new genre in the Iranian popular music scene. He explains its genesis as a process of

hybridization between pop music and a local song/dance genre from southern Iran. By integrating comments of Iranian experts with detailed musical analyses he can pinpoint crucial factors of this process which have resulted in a new icon of a modern Iranian identity.

Malik Sharif recaps major steps in the ethnomusicological study of popular musics and strongly urges us to pay much more attention to the so far mostly neglected audiences of these musics and how listeners experience and make use of them. He thus opens up new paths for future research in ethnomusicology.

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