

# On Bridges and Islands in the History of Ethnomusicology: Some Personal Reflections

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**Abstract:** *This text looks at the field of ethnomusicology and its history metaphorically as interaction between bridges and islands - at its preoccupation with the issue of boundaries, and the desire to find models appropriate to negotiating between a view of the world as a set of distinct musics and the interpretation of musical change of many sorts. Broadly speaking, the history of ethnomusicology since the 1940s has been one of decreasing interest in the "islands" approach and of increase in the contemplation of "bridges" between (and within) musics and music communities. I discuss several personal experiences, first in my early perception of music in the 1930s in Prague, then with reference to and illustrations from several research projects I carried out over the years, with minorities in the USA, Native Americans, musicians in Iran, and theories of musical change.*

*The conclusion suggests that the basic assumption established in the early twentieth century, which saw the world as a set of musics with emphasis on authenticity, should be amended into a model more appropriate for the interpretation of musical life in the contemporary world.*

**Key words:** *ethnomusicology, history, islands, bridges, Prague.*

## Introduction

This paper is principally a meditation on some aspects of the history of ethnomusicology, using the metaphor of bridges as an explanatory aid. In many different ways, the concept of bridges and what they connect has joined other icons that have sometimes been used to interpret directions in the history of ethnomusicology. These include the arrow and the circle -- the one referring to consistent forward movement, and the other, a pattern of returning to older models after they had been replaced by others (see B. Nettl 1998); or symbols such as sharp turns to the right or left, or U-turns (complete turns) of traffic to represent dramatic changes of direction. Ethnomusicologists have also, throughout their history, been concerned with the concept of borders between nations and cultures, and more specifically between the nature of musical styles, the distribution of songs and their variants, the locations of musical instruments, the uses of and ideas about music. They have interpreted borders on maps and between historical periods. They (we) have been concerned with such matters as the ways societies cross musical borders using such processes as fusion, modernization, or Westernization; and how they use musical styles and repertoires to maintain social and cultural boundaries. In examining these issues, the concept of bridges may be helpful in understanding how our field has developed.

Some selected aspects of the history of the field of ethnomusicology, for whose interpretation the metaphor of bridges is appropriate, constitute the main theme of this

paper. Most particularly, however, I am concerned with a number of individuals and events which tie this history to Prague (the venue of the conference at which this paper was presented) and with some of my personal relevant experiences.

### **Continents, Islands, Bridges**

As a point of departure, let me suggest a very broad interpretive model of the way ethnomusicology developed. I think we started out by conceiving of music as one large concept with a kind of center, which was the so-called common functional harmonic practice of European music, with the rest of the world of music related to this center somewhat like a set of concentric circles. Early music, new music, popular, folk, and in the end even non-Western music of all sorts were interpreted in their relationships to the center, their similarity or difference, using as a point of departure the tools of perception developed for Western classical music. We ethnomusicologists -- well, actually our predecessors -- conceived of the world of music as if it were something like one large continent, with a center and with outlying edges. For many obvious reasons, some lovers of classical music in Europe and the Americas and maybe elsewhere still maintain this kind of a perspective; there is the normal music of Bach and Beethoven and Stravinsky, and everything else is in various ways related, more or less distantly.

Gradually I think we came to look at the totality of music as a group of distinct musics, somewhat like a set of islands, far or not so far apart. The continental approach, which looked at music basically as a unit, was not abandoned, but we came to concentrate more on how the world's musical cultures were different from each other, on the uniqueness of each music. We became suspicious of claims of relationship and of claims of universals. Then, eventually, we began to add a third view, becoming more interested again in what these islands had to do with each other and we came to look at their relationships as if they were bridges -- and maybe the world of music as a large number of islands connected with bridges of all sorts, narrow and wide, long and short, permanent and temporary. I think we still do this.

So I suggest that we can see the history of ethnomusicology as three cumulative stages -- I am sure you recognize them. But let me flesh them out just a bit: In the early days of comparative musicology, it was recognized, of course, that musics -- musical cultures -- were different, but for a long time scholars concentrated on finding unified methods that would permit their view of the diverse musics to be conceptually integrated. I have in mind, for example, the kinds of transcription and analysis produced by E. M. von Hornbostel (discussed by him 1904-5) continued by George Herzog (1928), all trying to find methods applicable to all. Musics were seen as unique, but they could be comprehended, these scholars believed, by the same approach. Later, the work of Mieczyslaw Kolinski (e.g., 1965), and the cantometrics method of Alan Lomax (1968) also approached the world of music fundamentally as a unit. This approach has not been totally abandoned even now. The concept of universals, which was taken for granted in the early 20th century and which was resurrected for close examination in the 1960s and which is still with us, also belongs to this style of thought. This notion of the world's music as in essence a unit is still around, as in the renewed interest in the origins of music and

evolutionary musicology. But, having been pushed aside by later developments, it is now only a thin strand.

The second stage, which interprets the world of music somewhat as a group of islands, with the relationships among them less important than their individuality, may be illustrated by the growth of musical ethnography beginning in the 1960s (see Ruskin and Rice 2012), and in the increased interest in the hands-on study of performance. We talk about the bifurcation of ethnomusicology into orientations to anthropology and to musicology (narrowly conceived - with Alan P. Merriam and Mantle Hood as major representatives) in the late 1950s, but the two branches have conceptual commonalities. Concentrating on the music of a society by intensively practical study with a master, learning to play sitar or oud, and trying as well as one could to feel like a musician in that culture, this kind of approach may certainly lead to a perception of each music being an independent unit, to be understood in its own terms. And at the same time, in the 1960s, there also developed the notion of comprehensive ethnography -- in which the sound, the behavior and, most important, the ideas about music provided in each culture a distinctive configuration, which resulted in the publication of individually crafted ethnographies of music -- the earliest models were Alan Merriam's *Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians* (1967), Hugo Zemp's *Musique Dan* (1971), and John Blacking's *Venda Children's Songs* (1967).

But these two stages, if I may use the concept, were joined by new approaches that, seen together, emphasized relationships, and the metaphor of bridges seems appropriate here. But I think that after a point -- I am not sure just when, but some people have cited the beginning of urban ethnomusicology in the 1970s as a kind of landmark -- the center of gravity moved to a belief that what is important about understanding the world's music is the relationships among them. And there also developed an emphasis on research into the multifarious ways in which musics can be shown to be related, and also the study of musics that resulted, explicitly, from relationships among cultures. The following remarks provide some illustrations of this interpretation of the history of ethnomusicology, including figures from the history of Prague, which turns out, perhaps surprisingly, to have played a significant role in the history of our field and was the venue of the conference which led to this volume, and the work of John Blacking, in whose honor this lecture is presented.

### **Bridges between Composing and Improvising (and about Walter Kaufmann)**

One field of study in which the concept of bridges is apropos is improvisation, because it is in effect a bridge between explicit composition and the memorized performance of precomposition. But in connection with this, please allow me a personal anecdote to tell you how I think I first heard about what is now ethnomusicology. It was first from Walter Kaufmann, the composer and authority on Indian music born in Karlovy Vary (for details see Noblitt 1981). Now, my idea of proper music, as a little boy, was that one must read notes; that was clear to me watching my parents even before I could read anything. One day when I was four, Walter, a friend of my parents who sometimes played with me, told me he was moving far away, to India. I was unhappy to hear that, but he said, "You know, they have marvelous music, they just make it up in their heads!" Ever since, I've been fascinated, but I used to think, like many, that there were simply two kinds of

music, composed and improvised. As a student and young teacher, I felt that it was important for ethnomusicologists to persuade musicians and music-lovers to respect improvisation as much as conventional composition. Kaufmann did spend a decade in India and later, himself becoming a kind of bridge between oral and written traditions, published several major studies of the raga system (e.g., 1976), and also on notation systems of Asia (1976). It seems to me, however, that in the Western culture of the 1930s and for some decades further, composition was seen as a true art, while improvisation was considered a kind of entertainment or, at best, as a kind of craft. So, becoming an ethnomusicologist gave me the understanding that these two forms of music making should be given equal stature, as some musics were significantly improvised; others were not. (For an early example of this view, see Byrnside 1975). And sure enough, improvisers in Europe and North America began to distinguish themselves, establishing organizations for improvised music, trying to show that improvised music is in essence different, sounds different, from the composed.

But I would maintain that in the most absolute sense, composition with no personal creativity on the part of the performer and improvisation with no precomposed model of any sort are mythical islands. They are connected by a very real bridge of musical concepts and practices, as all music has varying degrees of composed and improvisatory components. As an example of the interaction of composition and improvisation, let me cite the variety of genres of Persian classical music (first presented in English by Zonis 1973): 1) *Tasnifs* are composed songs, each performed in many very contrastive versions by different singers and instrumentalists; 2) the *pishtaramad*, an introduction to large-scale performances, is intended for an ensemble and thus subject to less individuality of performers, but it is also performed by soloists with considerable flexibility. 3) The *chahar mezbab*, solo virtuoso music, denotes rather more a style than a genre and is ordinarily memorized though its sections or phrases may be greatly variable and repeated at will, their order may be changed, and they may include quotations from well-known *chahar mezbabs*. 4) The improvised or improvised-sounding *avaz*, is central in an extended performance. Each of these genres has elements of improvisation and precomposition, and each performance containing these genres provides a unique configuration of relationships between the opposite poles. They are in effect way stations on the bridge between composition and memorized performance. Each performer, for each genre, assumes a unique spot on a bridge between the *radif*, which he has learned and which is supposed to be the point of departure for improvisation and, on the other end, the product of the performer's creativity.

Having juxtaposed composition -- ultimate creativity -- and memorized performance as separate islands, with improvisation as a kind of bridge between them, we now should appreciate that most music is located at some point on this bridge between them, partaking to various degrees of what is precomposed and what is created in the course of performance. I'm glad here to pay homage to Walter Kaufmann, possibly the first scholar born in the Czech lands to contribute importantly to the understanding of Asian classical traditions and to the importance of improvisation.

## **Negotiating Relationships in Music and the Czech Lands (and about Paul Nettl)**

Music often plays a major role in negotiating social relationships of many sorts. This is particularly true in the music history of the Czech Republic and so an ethnomusicological approach to the history of music in the Czech lands would be promising. This is not my purpose here. But as a native of Prague, I would like to say a few words that tie my personal background to ethnomusicology. Let me begin with a word about my father, Paul Nettl, who wrote widely about many subjects, especially after his departure from Czechoslovakia in 1939. His earlier writings, however, are largely about Bohemia and, almost throughout, I recognize the usefulness of the concept of bridges in interpreting his thought. Establishing and showing relationships was his idea of humanistic scholarship. So to Paul Nettl, living in a heterogeneous culture was what made life interesting. In his life he had to negotiate various identities - ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, political.

But what made it all worthwhile to him, I think, was the fact that while the members of different ethnic groups and minorities in Bohemia struggled with each other for influence, resources, status, human rights, and while the history of music sometimes reflects these struggles, the more significant role of music was to establish relationships, to build bridges. And so Paul Nettl, in much of his work as a music historian, spent his energies showing the role of German-speaking composers in Prague (e.g., 1938), the influence of Jewish musicians in 17th-century Prague (e.g., 1923), the role of ethnically Czech composers in the Austrian empire and beyond. He believed, I would maintain, that music, perhaps more than anything else, tied people, groups of people, together. Much of his work was about obscure composers who, he felt, represented the people as a whole more perhaps than the great masters and thus his work related to ethnomusicology. In America, he worked to further the understanding of Czech music. But as a member of Prague society before 1938, he always felt that the most significant thing about this city and this country was its multi-cultural character.

Well, all of this was ruined through the actions of the Nazi movement and the consequences. But, before 1939, I think it is true that it was music that connected, provided bridges between cultures, sometimes making fun of the disparity, like the folksong that tells about a town whose Czech name is Domažlice, whose German name was Taus, but nobody knows what it is. And music as a bridge was displayed tragically in the last piano sonata (Sonata no. 7) by the composer Viktor Ullmann, born in Těšín, written in the camp of Terezín, which refers within the space of a few seconds to the old Slovak national anthem, a Jewish folk song, the German hymn "Ein feste Burg," the iconic Hussite hymn of Czech music, and the theme B-flat-A-C-B spelling Bach's name. Music as the bridge among cultures to the end; Ullmann lived only a few weeks after writing it.

## **Crossing the Bridge to Western Classical Music (and about John Blacking)**

The concept of bridges may also help in interpreting the changing role of Western classical music in ethnomusicology. When I was a student, comparative musicology was defined by its subject matter -- it was the study of tribal and indigenous musics, of Asian classical traditions, and of folk music everywhere. Some might have said: anything outside the scope of Western art music, which had its own population of musicologists, as firmly

stated by Kunst (1950). These definitions, however, omitted a lot of the world's music -- for example, the realm of popular music, the hymns sung by congregations in churches, marches played by military bands and school ensembles, the songs sung in children's summer camps, patriotic songs, and there are more categories all of which, together, we might today call "vernacular music." Our predecessors in the first half of the twentieth century seemed to pretend that these did not exist.

Also, to define themselves before the middle of the twentieth century, some comparative musicologists would say that our field is the study of the foreign, study of a music or musical culture by outsiders. Just what "foreignness" implies is a complicated issue; foreign to whom, one should then have asked. But gradually, ethnomusicology became more holistic, at least in intent. I do not know who led the way, but I think John Blacking was one of the first to lay aside the distinctions I mentioned and to write, as an ethnomusicologist, about Western art music along with other kinds of music. His signature book, *How Musical Is Man?* (1973), contemplates the music of the Venda, Mahler's 9th and 10th symphonies, and Britten's *War Requiem* under the same lens. Telling us that as a result of his fieldwork in Africa he no longer understands the history and structure of Western art music as clearly as he did, he could see no useful distinction between the words "folk" and "art" music and, by implication, other boundaries. So, I gladly take this opportunity to pay homage to John Blacking, who did so much, but who passed away much too early. Blacking maintained that looking at musics elsewhere will help us overcome misconceptions about our own music, whatever it is. Clearly, he was one who understood the many kinds of bridge-building potential of ethnomusicology and was a major force in making ethnomusicology what it is.

By now, the study of Western art music has formally been accepted as a component of ethnomusicology. There are books and articles and conferences on the subject. And yet these works seem to me to be outliers. There have, to be sure, been attempts to fashion a comprehensive musicology, and the uses of methods from historical musicology by ethnomusicologists have been established and recognized. And as for the study of music in culture, the hallmark of ethnomusicology, well, music historians have actually -- I have to defend them against commonly voiced accusations -- always done that. In my experience as a student, they were sometimes blamed for excessive interest in culture at the expense of music. But unlike music historians, ethnomusicologists have to overcome the problem of negotiating between "our" and "not-our" perspectives; between scholarship by cultural insiders and outsiders; and between the concepts of culture-specific as opposed to a universally valid perception.

There is, I believe, a need (and a tendency) for individual scholars to study both their own culture and other cultures, and this matter of translation, of bridging, continues to be a central issue of our methodology. Our problem has been: Are our perception and interpretation right? What's the point of my trying to figure out what Blackfoot Indian musical culture is all about if the Blackfoot people can do it better and, anyway, have the privilege of defining what is fact, and what is correct interpretation? Would it be better to train Blackfoot ethnomusicologists to study their own culture? (Certainly, this is something that should be-- is being -- done.) But the insider/outsider-ness of an individual is not easy to pinpoint. Could a Blackfoot woman with a PhD from SOAS returning to do fieldwork in Alberta ever be an authentic insider again? But, I am also motivated to ask, can a French

scholar investigating Baroque manuscripts in a Czech archive claim to be an insider working in her own culture?

The cross-cultural component of ethnomusicology continues, in my opinion, to be its central asset. Working on Western music as an ethnomusicologist, I feel I can do it best by pretending to be an outsider and, like Blacking, after having gained perspectives from contemplating foreign cultures. And when working as an outsider, my own point of greatest satisfaction has always come when one of my consultants or teachers, hearing my interpretation, says, "I think you are right, but I have never thought of it that way." The outsider's contribution.

### **The Individual as a Bridge among Musics (and about Alice Herz Sommer)**

Following people and peoples as they cross bridges, move from one country or continent to others in individual immigrations or in diasporas has been a major interest of ethnomusicologists since the 1960s. We've asked general questions: Do people abandon the music of their home and adopt that of the new? Do they use music to tie themselves to the old home? Melville Herskovits, studying New World populations of African origins and comparing them with each other concluded that, of the domains of culture, music -- followed closely by religion -- maintained the most African characteristics.

We talk about peoples and societies, but they are comprised of individuals who, in one society, may deal very differently with situations that they confront. Should we found an ethnomusicology of the individual? Ethnomusicology and what I'll call traditional musicology have sometimes been distinguished like this: Ethnomusicologists care about music with which an entire population identifies itself and music historians care about the contributions of individual musicians. Not really correct. As Jesse Ruskin and Timothy Rice elaborated in a 2012 article, ethnomusicology has always been significantly the study of individual persons, even though they may have claimed that this represented an entire society. And in times of immigration and diaspora, it is the individual person who carries his or her music over bridges, or leaves it behind.

Sometimes people hold tenaciously to their music as they are being forced to emigrate, perhaps repeatedly; sometimes I could observe the opposite process. Let me give two brief case studies from my experience. The first concerns Alice Herz Sommer (1903-2013), one of the most famous and distinctive musicians born in Prague, who passed away in London in 2013, being then the oldest known living Holocaust survivor. Having once been a close friend of my mother's in their student days in the 1920s, and also my friend for 84 years, she seems an appropriate figure for an ethnomusicologist to examine the role of music in a long career that included several emigrations (best represented in Müller and Piechocki 2007). So now, what can an ethnomusicologist say about Alice Sommer? She herself often said that music saved her life. Her biography (as recounted by Müller and Piechocki) can be divided into four periods -- her time in Prague before World War II, the years as a prisoner in the Terezín camp, then her long residence in Israel, and eventually her thirty years or so in London. Now, it would be interesting to see how the personal music culture of an individual who moves from place to place changes -- or does not change. I don't have general or comparative data, but for Alice, who defined herself by her music, there was always a central repertory which she regarded as basic: the works of Bach,

Beethoven Schubert, Schumann, of Smetana and Dvořák. It is true, in Terezín -- that incredibly anomalous music culture -- she also took up works, composed in the camp as well as earlier, by composers who were also inmates such as Viktor Ullmann -- and in Israel she occasionally performed living Israeli composers. But throughout her life there was this central repertory which was her daily bread. Between 1970 and 2005, her idea of a Christmas or birthday greeting to me was to sit down at the piano, turn on the tape recorder, play some of her favorite pieces, and put the cassette in the mail. I have a collection of them. The composers are all from that list. The different places in which she lived, the different cultures, did not make her change her basic musical identity.

And when speaking on the phone from London, as we occasionally did, she several times asked me this: "You're a musicologist. Can you explain this? How is it that the world's greatest music was all composed in a very small part of Europe, mainly Austria -- in a period of less than 100 years? Isn't that incredible?" I had no explanation and didn't want to argue, but to her, clearly, one small repertory was the center of the musical world. She couldn't quite get her head around my interest in what she thought were exotic and not really intelligible musics. Alice Sommer, moving from cultural island to island, was obliged to drastically change her living habits, and in a sense changed her principal language orientation from German and Czech to emphasis on Hebrew and then on English, but the music she grew up with remained her music. It was perhaps her restricted taste that gave music its life-saving quality.

My second case is of an individual whose experience of musical and cultural consistency is virtually the opposite of Alice Sommer's. It concerns my friend and teacher among the Blackfoot people in Montana, Calvin Boy (see B. Nettl 1968). His musical life began with singing Christian hymns and playing French horn in an American school band. He then changed his allegiance to the modern American Indian repertory of the intertribal powwow circuit and he finally, in later middle age, undertook to learn songs -- many perhaps quite old -- from the traditional tribal religious repertory, songs known to only a few old people. In all of this, Calvin, in contrast to Alice Sommer, never left the small town in which he was born.

### **Creating Bridges: Comparison and Comparative Study (and about Mieczyslaw Kolinski)**

The concept of bridges brings us inevitably to the matter of comparison. Earlier I suggested that, in its first decades, ethnomusicology concentrated on how things were and ignored the way things were changing. Now it is change that is the constant and of course the concept of bridges is an appropriate metaphor. The study of change requires us to accept to some degree the concept of comparison, which was central once, then placed in the background, and has lately been coming back; it has needed to come back.

Am I beating a dead horse? We know that the old comparative musicologists were not really spending their time making comparisons and, when comparisons were made, they were not usually made to show the superiority of one music over another. But for a time comparison in ethnomusicology had a bad reputation. A number of scholars in the 1960s and 1970s wrote vigorously attacking it. (For the following citations, see Merriam 1982, and discussion in Nettl 2015:123 and 136)) For John Blacking it was a problem: he

wished to be sure that intercultural comparison of forms was kept separate from comparison of meanings and he felt that "speculative histories of world music are a complete waste of time." Norma McLeod, reviewing Alan Lomax's work, thought that his style of comparative study in the cantometrics project was meaningless. And the greatest opponent seems to have been Mantle Hood, who in various publications pronounced comparison as worthless. In 1963:233, he wrote, "It seems a bit foolish in retrospect that the pioneers of our field became engrossed in the comparison of different musics before any real understanding of the musics being compared has been achieved." But they hadn't been doing much comparing: "comparative" was really a code word for "intercultural."

Alan Merriam, in what I consider a brilliant paper insufficiently known (1982), opposed these generalized attacks and ended by saying, "instead of thinking of reasons for discarding it, we need to devote concentrated attention to making comparison a more workable weapon in the ethnomusicological arsenal" (1982:187). This was actually Merriam's last publication and it appeared two years after his death, in a festschrift for a person who for a long time almost personified intercultural comparisons in music, Mieczyslaw Kolinski.

I am happy to mention Kolinski here because he lived in Prague for several years, 1933-1938, his story recalled in an important article by Vít Zdrálek. One of only two people who completed a PhD under Hornbostel in comparative musicology, and later Hornbostel's assistant, Kolinski sought refuge in Czechoslovakia from the persecution of the Nazis. For his life and his work in particular the term "bridge" is appropriate. He moved from his native Poland to study in Germany and, after his first exile in Czechoslovakia, was forced into exile again, going into hiding in Belgium, moving to the USA where his streets were not paved with gold and where he had to work as a freelance ethnomusicologist while making his living as a pianist accompanying dance classes and then as a music therapist. At age sixty he moved yet again into exile of sorts, to Canada, where he finally got the academic position he deserved. He crossed many bridges and he carried his ethnomusicological commitments with him, sticking perhaps more than most to the spirit of his teacher Hornbostel, who considered transcription the fundamental skill of his field. Kolinski spent most of his time in Prague making transcriptions of music for scholars at American universities (see Zdrálek 2010).

But again following Hornbostel, whose publications encompass excursions into the musics of five continents, Kolinski was one of the few people who really wanted to learn about the music of the world and he wanted ethnomusicology to be a kind of intellectual bridge connecting all. And for much of his later life he strove mightily to devise a system for describing and classifying all imaginable music. He wished to make an accounting of all imaginable intervals, scale types, kinds of melodic movement, rhythmic patterns, and then show their frequency and distribution in a large sampling of world music. A huge task, and Kolinski did not get all that far and had only partial success, being ridiculed as an armchair scholar whose approaches were etic when they should have been emic. His desire to find a system for classifying all of the world's music was fearfully out of step with ethnomusicology as it was developing in the 1960s and 1970s, dominated as it was by anthropologists who spent their lives in one or two cultures and by the sworn enemies of cultural evolution.

Finding schemes that help us to show the nature of the musical universe are numerous. Let me mention one connected with the history of music scholarship in Prague. Vít Zdrálek began his insightful article (2010) about Kolinski by asking with a bit of humor whether there has ever been any ethnomusicology in Prague. Zdrálek replied that, contrary to widespread opinion, there had been a lot -- and he tells, among other things, that Gustav Becking, ordinarius of musicology from 1930 to 1945, a man executed for his position in the Nazi hierarchy on May 8, 1945, was the adviser of seven dissertations that could be regarded as ethnomusicological. But Becking's most daring accomplishment, and one related to the later approaches of Kolinski and Lomax, was his classification of composers in accordance with the character of their rhythmic structure and as illustrated by the so-called Becking curves as described in his book of 1928, *Der musikalische Rhythmus als Erkenntnisquelle*, published before he came to Prague and I guess before he became a fascist.

### **Are We Doing Anyone Any Good? (Honoring John Blacking)**

In the twenty-first century, a new period in the history of ethnomusicology has come into its own, a period in which the concept of bridges has been intensified. For one thing there has been the phenomenal growth of applied ethnomusicology, although the term sounds just a bit lame to me. This brings together a lot of seemingly disparate orientations -- among the code words are music education, conflict resolution, repatriation, medical ethnomusicology, protection of intellectual property. Maybe we have finally realized that what we have learned and how we have interpreted musical culture may be of importance to people outside our field and of some practical use. What's the history? Well, when I became a student in 1948, I was sometimes asked whether what I was studying or finding out would do anyone any good. Well, there were those who thought that the main benefit of learning about strange musics was that they might inspire Western composers. I preferred to emphasize the benefit of simply creating new knowledge. But would what we were doing benefit the people from whom we were learning? This, on the whole, came later.

But let's not claim that our ancestors were totally oblivious of the power of traditional music to be beneficial. The early collectors of folk songs -- in Bohemia they included Ludvik Rittersberk and Karel Jaromír Erben -- hoped to benefit working classes, ethnic groups, minorities, even nations -- to build self-esteem in the way this is now being done with the music of minorities in many American and European schools. And the hope of helping non-European musicians to maintain their traditions through the help of scholarship is also hardly new -- I will just mention the Cairo congress on Arabic music, in which the Czech composer Alois Hába was an honored participant (see Racy 2015).

But the question became more widely recognized after about 1960, when not only to ask ourselves whether what we were learning might benefit the people from whom we learned, but also whether we were doing harm as colonialists taking resources from other peoples, imposing our approaches on them. This is all too complicated for me to discuss here, but let me just suggest that doing our consultants or teachers some good would have been seen, in those early days, as just a bi-product.

When I say that we may be in a new period, it is because there are increasingly ethnomusicologists for whom doing somebody some good becomes a primary goal. I

would like to see research that balances benefit to our host cultures with increased understanding of general issues.

Let me give a brief example. Most Blackfoot Indian songs sound rather alike to us (Westerners) and in most respects they also sound rather alike to Blackfoot people as well. But they are part of a complex system of control and ownership -- songs belong to the tribe, or to bands, or to individuals who may, or may not (depending on the song) give or sell them; and songs that, as it were, belong to supernatural figures who control what may be done. How to understand this, and how to make it fit into the American legal system of intellectual property, is a two-sided issue for us. And looking at Western music from a similar perspective, we must deal with the value of unique content and originality. A composer gets credit for originality but within bounds. And how should we, as ethnomusicologists, deal with concepts such as borrowing, stealing, quoting, honoring -- and how similar must two musical ideas or techniques be for this to become an issue? Surely here what one might call pure scholarship and applied ethnomusicology intersect. The concept of bridges is central to many aspects of these issues.

Let me conclude by asserting that we in ethnomusicology have learned a lot and have much more to learn. I think it's a good thing that we have increasingly become concerned with an approach to music that emphasizes bridges, that, in addition to being observers of the bridges in human culture, we have ourselves also become, in effect, the bridges between cultures and musics and between traditional and innovative perspectives.

John Blacking, whom I respected and admired very greatly, whom I also enjoyed as a friend, and with whom I usually agreed, was a builder of bridges in music studies extraordinaire. He was also a social activist who wished to improve the life of humanity, promulgating fairness and justice, fighting against the oppressiveness he found in most societies, the coercion of humans into undemocratic social systems. Refusing to separate musics by quality or prestige, but still maintaining artistic standards and also insisting on the special value of music among the domains of culture, he ended his book, *How Musical Is Man*, with the following words:

In this world of cruelty and exploitation in which the tawdry and the mediocre are proliferated endlessly for the sake of financial profit, it is necessary to understand why a madrigal by Gesualdo, or a Bach passion, a sitar melody from India or a song from Africa, Berg's *Wozzeck* or Britten's *War Requiem*, a Balinese gamelan or a Cantonese opera, or a symphony by Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler may be profoundly necessary for human survival, and [contrastively] why, under certain circumstances, a simple folk song may have more human value than a complex symphony.

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