

Bruno NETTL, *Blackfoot Musical Thought: Comparative Perspectives* (Kent, Ohio, and London, England, Kent State University Press, 1989, p. 198, ISBN 0-87338-370-2, \$21.00)

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of this book) privy to this central aspect of Okanagan traditional religion and Harry's life.

Most of Harry's traditional stories he acquired from his maternal grandmother, but the "white people stories" he learned directly from the white settlers in the Similkameen. "Puss in Boots", which concludes this collection, is one such. That he readily incorporated this story, of all possible European tales, into his repertory Wickwire relates to his aesthetic, for stories of animals with magic power would naturally appeal to native Okanagan storytellers. If there is a significant lack in this book, it is the elaboration of the storyteller's aesthetic. Since Harry did tell stories in both English and Okanagan, it would have been interesting to know which he chose to tell under what circumstances in which language to whom and why. But, by the time Wickwire made her collection, Harry was telling stories mostly in English by virtue of the erosion of the native language, and his collaborator did not know Okanagan well enough to work in it anyway. Such an error of omission, then, was unavoidable, for Harry was also in decaying health at the latter stages of the project when analytic questions concerning aesthetics would most naturally have arisen.

The only other lack—and one that might yet be rectified—is the absence of an accompanying recording of the tale-telling events. Even if in relatively brief selections, Harry Robinson's actual voice would undoubtedly breathe still more vitality into the entire work and make it all the more useful in the classroom.

This work should stand as an example of what a non-exploitative, symbiotic collaboration between natives and non-natives can produce. It certainly belies the current claims that only natives themselves should write about native culture, and offers an exceptional insight into that culture for outsiders while preserving a significant aspect of it for the inheritors to have forever.

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Bruno NETTL, *Blackfoot Musical Thought: Comparative Perspectives* (Kent, Ohio, and London, England, Kent State University Press, 1989, p. 198, ISBN 0-87338-370-2, \$21.00)

In his earlier four-part descriptive account of Blackfoot music culture ("Studies in Blackfoot Indian Musical Culture", EM, 1967, 11: p. 141-160,

292-309, and 1968, 12: p. 11-48, 192-207), Bruno Nettl devoted one part (co-authored with Stephen Blum) to issues of conceptualization. In his latest monograph, he has returned to these issues to offer a fuller, more comprehensive treatment. In comparison with his earlier books, this one is the most reflexive of any of Nettl's work; cast in the first person, for the most part, his reflections involve a good deal of self-criticism and even self-doubt as he repeatedly describes the study as reconstructing "a dinosaur from a bone in its tail" (p. 44, 173). Like much of the rest of his research, the approach is fundamentally comparative — testing the categories of Western music and of ethnomusicology against those of the Blackfoot. The comparisons are perhaps, at the same time, the book's greatest strength and greatest weakness. He reveals starkly and honestly the poor fit between Western concepts and Blackfoot ones; this is an important introductory lesson for non-Native readers. However, he tends to speculate about, rather than research the reasons for the "poor fit" and thereby, becomes candidly but securely caught in his own conceptual ethnocentricity. Hence perhaps the book is not so much a reconstruction from a single bone as a clear view of many bones which are sometimes disregarded because they are mistaken for other objects.

To be fair, my criticism addresses only the first of his two objectives in writing the book: "to describe... the ideas and concepts that define and surround music" (p. ix). His other aim, "to carry out an exercise in method and technique of musical ethnography, particularly in finding and communicating ways of studying and presenting comprehensively the musical culture of a society" (p. ix) is achieved in sections where he queries the nature of a consultant's authority, where he tries to reconcile differences among field data, or between historical and contemporary sources, or where he ponders abstractions or incidents which make no sense to him.

Following an introduction which outlines why he wanted to write the book, he organizes his presentation into five chapters. The first of these, "Background", contains the information one might expect to find in a musical ethnography: a brief historical account of the Blackfoot, a description of source materials, an account of his own fieldwork which took place in Montana sporadically between 1950 and 1986, a description of historical change in songs in Blackfoot life 1890-1985, and very short descriptions of four musical events ("Medicine bundle rituals", "the Sun Dance", "North American Indian Days", and "The Hand Game"). This reviewer would have preferred a "thick" description of four specific events which might have revealed or exemplified some cogent bases of Blackfoot musical thought in ways that brief generic descriptions do not. The major problem in the chapter, however, is his attempt to make an *a priori* case for the dangerous "assumption that there is still a close relationship between the Blackfoot music culture of a hundred years ago and that of today" (p. 8), an assumption which permits the author to consider "that

there is such a thing as a Blackfoot musical culture” (p. 10). In spite of the considerable upheaval of the people and the demonstrable change in repertoire which he describes in the same chapter, he argues that concepts have remained stable. In fact, he posits that, of the three “branches” — namely, concept, behaviour, and sound structure — of the Merriam model for ethnomusicological study, the concept branch is the most resistant to change. In light of this seemingly intuitive assumption, he frequently collapses history and homogenizes diversity. In light of the insights yielded by the careful historical reconstructions of several recent ethnomusicological studies (e.g., Vander, 1988; Levine, 1989; Browner, 1990), Nettl’s assumptions are indeed questionable. Careful acknowledgement of the ways in which a culture grows and changes, as well as the ways in which specific ethnographies are also historically situated, could yield stronger insights into the formation and reception of Blackfoot music concepts.

Chapter 2, “Fundamentals”, contains sub-sections on “The Concept of Music”, “Songs of the Primary Units”, “The Musical Universe”, “The Essence of Musical Sound”, “Music and Language”, “Kinds of Music”, and “Kinds of People and Things”. Unlike a number of scholars (e.g., List, Seeger, Cavanagh, Beaudry) who have used “sound” as a domain of enquiry in Native American studies, both North and South American, Nettl seeks to find Blackfoot equivalents for “music” (a term for which there is no equivalent), its components, kinds, and values. Some of his terminology — neither his consultants nor this reviewer seemed to understand what he meant by “musicness” — as well as his relentless pursuit of taxonomies of music objects (“units”) with rigidly defined categories limited comprehension of the teachings offered to him. Though he records the phrases, he does not seem to have explored what it means to “pay attention” to a song or to offer “respect” to songs, or how a song can be experienced as “emblematic” of a tribe.

The title of Chapter 3, “History: Origins, Sources, and Change”, might suggest that Nettl is, after all, backing away from his assertion of continuous culture in Chapter 1. But here, too, there are some conceptual dissonances. There is a curious juxtaposition of “origins” as conceptualized by the earliest generations of ethnomusicologists, and “origins” as part of the mythic world of the Blackfoot. Caught in the linearity of the former, he is troubled by the lack of clear order in mythic events (p. 92) and the rarity of specific references to “music”. With regard to sources for specific songs, a subject which is prevalent in mythology, he acknowledges learning in “visions” but, citing earlier ethnologies, does little to explicate the experience of “vision” or the multiple referents of this term in Native discourse. His questions, in fact, reflect Western concerns with innovation (“what constitutes a new song”; “in what ways must a song be different from others to be regarded as ‘a song’”, p. 98), but there is no suggestion that the values inherent in this emphasis may need to be deconstructed in the comparison process. In his construction of historical change, we find tinges

of evolutionary theory (“an archaic layer which in each repertory preceded the development of other, more complex music”, p. 104) and diffusionism (gambling songs are identified as the oldest stratum “and determined to be so because of the continental distribution of their musical style”, p. 105), and a strong commitment to the culture area configurations of Kroeber (“Given the basic assumptions of the culture area concept, various elements of the Blackfoot style as well as uses of music may thus have come from the south”, p. 106). The twentieth-century section reifies the “compartmentalization of Indian and white musics” (p. 108) although Witmer’s work (1982) with the Blood, on which Nettl relies extensively for data, has contrary evidence; he also argues for “modernization” rather than “Westernization”—terminology which he, himself, has defined in *The Western Impact on World Music: Change, Adaptation, Survival* (New York, Schirmer, 1985), and which he summarizes together with models for the study of acculturation by Kartomi and Shiloah/Cohen in Appendix C.

Chapter four is titled “Music in Human and Supernatural Societies” and deals with use and function, the latter two carefully distinguished à la Merriam (1964: 209-18). While Nettl is concerned with the theoretical difference between use and function and the ways in which he can map consultant’s comments on to the clear distinctions he seeks to establish, this reviewer was more concerned with the distinction made in the title between the “human” and “supernatural”, a boundary which, in my experience, is not made by most Native speakers. He develops, here, a theory of Blackfoot music as a means of communication with the “outside”—other tribes, other peoples, the spirit world—but the Euro-American bias of his distinctions weakens the discussion of “power” and “medicine”. Still wedded to the “song as unit” notion, he tries to isolate the source of power (in the song?, in the words?, in the action?) as if process were not involved and, in the discussion of song texts, he considers only the subject matter, not the repetition patterns, mythic references, or cultural embeddedness of their ritual use. He ascribes a “heroic” quality to behaviour and events associated with music performance (warfare, individualism, even seriousness are part of this). In a conclusion on “humour in Music” he seems, curiously, uncomfortable with the idea that the serious and the humorous can be juxtaposed. In this chapter, however, we do find valuable extended quotations from Blackfoot consultants.

The chapter on “Musicianship” (5) is, in this reviewer’s opinion, the most informative. A small glossary is offered, unfortunately containing no terms relating to dance. Although he refers to the richness of English terms regarding drumming, the glossary lists only Blackfoot terms. The biggest problem in this chapter is the homogenization of different performance contexts and different genres. Discussions of “Musical form and function”, “Ensembles and drumming”, “Ideas of performance”, in particular, make only passing reference

to generic or contextual differences. He then discusses means of evaluation without considering the possibility of fundamental cultural difference between styles of evaluation in Blackfoot and Euro-American cultures or, indeed, the inappropriateness of making evaluative statements in many Native contexts.

The final chapter, "A Blackfoot Theory Text?", summarizes the group of comments by consultants which he deems central to the development of a theory of Blackfoot music as presented in this book. This is an interesting list, although its value would be further enhanced by contextual information (who is speaking, in what context, in response to what questions?). As it stands, one is left with many questions.

The back-matter constitutes some of the most valuable material in this book. His "Chronological list of Recorded Collections of Blackfoot Music (1897-1986)" and an appendix charting "Blackfoot song types by use, as found in the various recorded collection" are made with typical Nettl precision and comprehensiveness. (On the other hand, the three Blackfoot songs transcribed in Appendix B are, unfortunately, not identified in any way; nor are the vocables transcribed.) His bibliography is characteristically expansive.

In summary, this book is Nettl at his riskiest. As a seasoned ethnomusicologist, he can offer us useful insights into the processes of fieldwork by presenting a candid and vulnerable "story", one which perhaps a younger scholar might not dare to write. But, in his attempts to reach beyond the ethnocentrism of Euro-centric musical concepts, he gets mired in the ethnocentrism of lingering colonial paradigms as well as terminology which emanates from the "ethnomusicology sub-culture". The curious result is an unjust homogenization of historical and social process and an old-fashioned artifact approach to song and ceremony. While many of his other books will continue to hold a prominent place as texts and recommended reading on university course syllabi, this monograph will perhaps not be the one for which Nettl should be most often remembered.

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Jordan PAPER, *Offering Smoke: The Sacred Pipe and Native American Religion* (Edmonton, Alberta, University of Alberta Press, 1989. xv + 161 pp. 0-88864-202-4)

In *Offering Smoke*, Jordan Paper of York University, Toronto, Ontario, has produced a work to help scholars and other readers increase their appreciation of the importance of the pipe in Native American religion. Calling the pipe the "core ritual and symbolic heart" (p. xiii) of many Native traditions and comparing its role to the Torah in Judaism and the Qur'an in Islam (p. 13), he emphasizes its place in the religious life of indigenous peoples of North America by capitalizing the word and prefacing it with "Sacred" ("Sacred Pipe") throughout the work.

Paper opens the work with a description of a contemporary pipe ritual and some observations about the use of tobacco in Native American religions. Over the next four chapters he discusses the pipe in relation to ritual, myth, typology and symbolism, and finally geographic distribution and history. These chapters are followed by an epilogue on persecution and revitalization that summarizes the effects of European settlement in North America and highlights the way the pipe has been used in recent decades to unite Native peoples in pan-Indian movements. Each of the sections in the book is able to stand alone as a self-contained unit; Paper's argument that the pipe is central to Native American religion serves to integrate the separate discussions.

The overall organization of the work reflects an interdisciplinary approach. In the chapters on ritual and myth, Paper surveys published ethnohistoric data and ethnographic studies to find records of the use of and attitudes towards the pipe by different Native peoples from the sixteenth century to the present. The chapter on geographic distribution is based on several years of study in the major museum collections and suggests a more widespread use of pipes in pre-contact Native cultures than previously argued. An appendix outlines the methodology and criteria used to select data.

Notwithstanding Paper's impressive array of data gathered from diverse sources, it is never quite clear what he is demonstrating and what he has