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van der Meer, W.; Erickson, R.

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Resonating Cultural Musicology; sources, streams and issues
Wim van der Meer and Rebecca Erickson

source (n.)
mid-14c., from Old French source "a rising, beginning, fountainhead of a river or stream," fem. noun taken from past participle of sourdre "to rise, spring up," from Latin surgere "to rise" (see surge). Meaning "written work (later also a person) supplying information or evidence" is from 1788. (etymonline.com)

stream (n.)
Old English stream "a course of water," from Proto-Germanic *straumaz (cf. Old Saxon strom, Old Norse straumr, Danish strøm, Swedish ström, Norwegian strøm, Old Frisian stram, Dutch stroom, Old High German stroum, German Strom "current, river"), from PIE root *sreu- "flow" (see rheum). Meaning "current in the sea" (e.g. Gulf Stream) is recorded from late 14c. Stream of consciousness in lit crit first recorded 1931, originally in psychology (1855). (etymonline.com)

issue (n.)
c.1300, "exit, a going out, flowing out," from Old French issue "a way out, exit," from fem. past participle of issir "to go out," from Latin exire (cf. Italian uscire, Catalan exir), from ex- "out" (see ex-) + ire "to go," from PIE root *ei- "to go" (see ion). Meaning "discharge of blood or other fluid from the body" is from 1520s; sense of "offspring" is from late 14c. Meaning "outcome of an action" is attested from late 14c., probably from French; legal sense of "point in question at the conclusion of the presentation by both parties in a suit" (early 14c. in Anglo-French) led to transferred sense of "a point to be decided" (1836). Meaning "action of sending into publication or circulation" is from 1833. (etymonline.com)

an important topic or problem for debate or discussion: the issue of racism | raising awareness of environmental issues.

issues (n.) personal problems or difficulties: emotions and intimacy issues that were largely dealt with through alcohol. I like him, though I have some issues with the guy.

issues (n.) problems or difficulties, especially with a service or facility: a small number of users are experiencing connectivity issues.

[ mass noun ]the action of supplying or distributing an item for use, sale, or official purposes: the issue of notes by the Bank of England.

[ count noun ] a number or set of items distributed at one time: a share issue has been launched.

[ count noun ] each of a regular series of publications: the December issue of the magazine.

a result or outcome of something: the chance of carrying such a scheme to a successful issue was small.

the action of flowing or coming out: a point of issue.

[ mass noun ] formal or Law children of one's own: the earl died without male issue. (dictionary, macos 10.8)

resonate
vb intr.
To exhibit or produce resonance or resonant effects.
To evoke a feeling of shared emotion or belief: “It is a demonology [that] seems to resonate among secular and religious voters alike” (Tamar Jacoby).
To correspond closely or harmoniously: “Symbolism matters, especially if the symbols resonate with the larger message” (William Greider).

vb tr.
To cause to resound. (education.yahoo.com)

Fig 1a and 1b: Reorganising musicology. Systematic or cognitive musicology would on the depth axis.
Introduction

Some people think that cultural musicology is another designation for ethnomusicology and others think it is new musicology. How strange. What a coincidence. The same term is used for two very different disciplines. But this is not entirely accurate though, because new musicology has been influenced by ethnomusicology’s ‘music as culture’ approach.

It is however very urgent that we reorganise musicology entirely and in that process cultural musicology will prove to be something quite different from either ethno- or new musicology. In the first place, and this has been said many times by Charles Seeger, musicology should be the general term, studying all and any music in every possible way. That early musicologists in Germany took on the music that was near hands, and thus studied German music is understandable. Similarly, an Indian musicologist is likely to take his examples from Indian music. So far so good, and there is nothing wrong with musicology conducted in this way. Problems that cropped up were when the German musicologists were only studying German elite music, and with very rare exceptions stooped to study popular music. In India it was generally quite the same, although Matanga (ca. 5th/8th century, translation 1982) was apparently studying the music of kings and commoners alike (as he defined desi). The simple reason why musicologists mainly studied elite music was that they were themselves voices within that elite. At the time of musicology (the formal discipline’s) beginnings it was unheard of for a scholar to study the music of peasants and barbarians. In the famous 1958 meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology Charles Seeger submitted that the term ‘musicology’ was hijacked by ‘western classical’ music, though perhaps it would be more accurate to say the elite music of the colonising powers (Notes and News1959). However, Seeger was perhaps not entirely right, for musicology as it emerged in the 19th century never questioned which music should be studied, it was just a matter of course that musicologists studied the music they knew most intimately. As such, the fault is not with the musicologists hijacking the term, but with ethnomusicologists later segregating themselves from musicology by claiming ‘other music’ as their territory and leaving ‘western classical music’ to the old ‘musicologists’. The term ethnomusicology is therefore a remnant of a (neo-)colonial heritage and those who call themselves ethnomusicologists wittingly subscribe to this elitist, racist and sexist ideology. In the same way, the term ‘world music’ in reality is a submission to the idea that there is ‘music’, which is European classical (and perhaps North American popular) music, and there is other music - the music of ‘most of the world’.

In this article we will first trace the uses of the term cultural musicology, then look at the disciplines that played a role in its emergence, next formulate a broad and open-ended outline of its contents and finally demonstrate that even though the term is relatively young, it has a very long history in thinking about music.

A personal note: why I am not an ethnomusicologist or a world music student

When I entered Amsterdam University in 1967, at the age of eighteen years, I had been infected by the Indian music virus and it seemed to me that a combination of anthropology, musicology and Hindi would be a good preparation for the goal I had set: to go to India and continue my studies there. Amsterdam was a good place for these studies as there was a tutorial on Indian music, I took my BA in anthropology and obtained a scholarship for continuing my studies in India. There I enrolled in the Delhi School of Economics, with the sociologist André Béteille as my guide. I also followed courses in the Delhi University music department, but my main focus was learning the music, for which purpose I enrolled in Bharatiya Kala Kendra and became a disciple of Pandit Dilip Chandra Vedi, a senior vocalist (born 1901), and himself a student of very famous musicians: Bhaskar Rao Bakhle, Faiyaz Khan and Alladiya Khan. In 1973 I returned to Amsterdam for a brief period to get my degree in anthropology and afterwards I immediately returned to
India to continue my music lessons and start a research project, which subsequently led to my PhD in the department of Indian Languages and Cultures at Utrecht University in 1977.

My degree was in anthropology, but I had drifted completely into music. I didn’t feel like an ethnomusicologist though, because the use of its methods during this time (the outsider’s view, transcriptions in staff notation, dragging tape-recorders around, interpreting ‘other’ music in terms of European terminologies) all seemed unsuitable to Indian music studies. To paraphrase Joseph Kerman, “Indian music is just too different to be compared to any non-Indian musics” (Kerman 1985: 174). [Let me explicitly state here that I consider Kerman’s statement about the uniqueness of ‘western music’ moot, as all musics are unique and yet not in this same way]. The attempts to rewrite Indian musicology in terms of European music theory, which started in the late 18th century, mainly led to enormous confusion and endless misunderstandings. By the end of the nineteenth century this project began to crack, partly thanks to the independence movement. Blissfully, staff notation was dropped as the instrument for ‘writing’ Indian music and the old Indian syllabic notation won that battle. Additionally, it should be noted that in the anthropological school of Amsterdam the term ‘ethnology’ had been abandoned in the 1960s in favour of social and cultural anthropology. In Leiden they were still doing ethnology at the time and for us that was hopelessly colonial and old-fashioned. Nor did I become a ‘western’ musicologist. I don’t believe we can really ‘know’ more than maybe two or three musics, although we can know something about many musics. A typical Indian adage states that the ‘western’ approach is to know one thing about everything whereas the Indian approach is to know everything about one thing. I do not know everything about Indian music, and I suspect no musicologist in the ‘European high-art tradition’ would claim to know everything about that music. Most ethnomusicologists are specialists in one particular music, but they generally take interest in one or more musics outside of their specialisation, unlike Kerman, who professed, “not to be interested in non-Western music or the popular music of the West” (1985: 19). Ethnomusicologists very often know European classical music well, as many have had their early training in it, followed courses in it in the musicology department and enjoy it! Furthermore, and unlike Kerman’s brand of musicologists, ethnomusicologists were among the first to pick up popular music studies despite a hesitation in their historiographies regarding so-called ‘inauthentic’ hybrid popular musics of the world.

In the second half of the twentieth century there have been many debates about the aim, method and girth (“Umfang”, cf. Adler 1885) of the disciplines of musicology and ethnomusicology. When Kunst coined the term ethnomusicology he defined it as the study of all music except “Western art- and popular (entertainment-) music”. Kerman used a similar working definition of musicology as the study of Western “high-art” music and ethnomusicology as the study of all other music. Although there are hundreds of different definitions of these disciplines, and many attempts have been made to redefine them, the old division tends to linger on, and although many ethnomusicologists maintain that their discipline is not about ethnic music but rather about ‘music in/as culture’ or the ‘ethnography of music’ the colonial association with ‘west versus rest’ lingers on. In the 1980s a number of scholars, who felt that the association of ethnomusicology with ethnic music was out-dated, proposed the term “world music studies”. However, like David Byrne, I too would hate world music (1999), for the reasons I have already stated. In my experience, the students in our department of musicology at the University of Amsterdam already (for decades) have a far more eclectic interest than some musicologists (and ethnomusicologists) of Kerman’s generation. These new generations may have grown up with European art music and North Atlantic pop, and in addition they probably came in contact with several ‘other’ musics: klezmer, jazz, reggae, Indian music, Latin music, gamelan, rai, country, Balkan music, capoeira, Greek music, Bollywood, flamenco, fado, blues, samba, Arabic music or one of the other 7000 odd musics. The process of encounter has been streamlined and simplified, we come across these musics now in concert halls, in parks, on the streets, on television, through Spotify or iTunes. I propose to depart radically from the paradigms of the past leaving behind regional or genre-based distinctions, but, (and instead!) speak of dimensions, orientations, and perspectives in musicology, among which the cultural, historical and cognitive would figure most prominently. These dimensions are not and cannot be separate or independent, but necessarily operate in conjunction with each other fostering interdisciplinarity integral to a thorough understanding of the world’s musics.
METHOD

In this article we will outline cultural musicology by a process of recurring interaction between history, present and future. The historical data consists of explicit and implicit definitions of the term ‘cultural musicology’ but also of studies that we could possibly denote as cultural musicology, without the concrete use of that term. Obviously this includes forerunners of cultural musicology, among them the study of national musics, comparative musicology, music ethnography (French: ethnographie musicale), folk music studies (German: musikalische Völkerkunde), world music studies, ethnomusicology (Bor 2008), anthropology of music and new musicology. To be clear from the outset: cultural musicology is not a confluence, juxtaposition or union of those disciplines which are distinct from each other in their history, definition, practice, praxis, and foundations. In many ways cultural musicology differs from them, sometimes taking issue with them but more often exploring untrodden paths. Investigating the history of cultural musicology beyond the texts where the term has actually been used is precarious, it is true, and that is because it depends on the definition of cultural musicology that we have derived from those texts that do use the term and in particular the projection of a cultural musicology of the future. As a result, there is a circular reasoning revolving around our own view of what cultural musicology could have been and could be.

In studying the texts that do use the terminology we will try to figure out the reason why it was being used. There are three categories of such usage: first, there are those who have ‘invented’ or ‘introduced’ the text because they were dissatisfied with existing denominations for the way they saw the discipline, then there are those who have commented on such definitions–usually criticising them and suggesting the new term was not in order– and finally there are those who have used the term implicitly, more or less taking for granted that it is/was a known discipline.

Hopefully, this exercise may clarify what could be cultural musicology, all the time insisting that it remains an open set. It is mainly by scanning the internet, through various search engines, Google books, Google scholar and JSTOR that we have traced a number of occurrences of “cultural musicology”, which we analyse with the objectives described above. We are starting out, however, from a number of unpublished documents: lectures delivered by Birgit Abels and myself over the past two years. Two lectures by Birgit Abels we refer to are her inaugural speech at Göttingen University in 2011 and her introduction to the GfM meeting in 2012. My own lectures were delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Indian Musicological Society in Mumbai, at the conference of the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia in São Paulo and at the Bilateral workshop on cultural musicology held in Amsterdam, all in 2012.

History of the term and the ideas (2012-1959)

In many institutions of higher education around the world, the department of musicology limits its endeavors to the history of European classical music. This is the result of a historical process in which musicology in Europe was promoted by the intellectual elite, whose knowledge and interest in music was bounded by their social and cultural backgrounds. In institutions around the world that were modeled on the structures of their colonial masters, this particular viewpoint was perpetuated. At present, in countries in East Asia and, to some extent Latin America, this conception of musicology is being questioned. It is interesting that the historical approach, often considered the onset of musicology, is really the youngest branch of musicology, if we take a broader historical and planetary perspective. Possibly the oldest mode of thinking about music is the systematic approach or the theory of music. The oldest treatises that we are familiar with speak about tone and tuning systems, rhythms, genres and instruments. However, reflections on the relations among music, society and culture—which we could well call cultural musicology—also figured prominently in ancient texts. In oral traditions, profound thinking in these two orientations can also be recognised. The specific designation ‘cultural musicology’ has existed for more than half a century (Smith 1959), but in spite of this, it never became very popular terminology. The French terminology “muscologie culturelle” occurs as early as 1936 (Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques) and it seems to refer to subjects that at the time would usually be named “ethnographie musicale”. The index entry in the Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques refers to articles on ‘primitive’ music which would certainly correlate to “muscologie culturelle” obtaining under the guise of “ethnographie musicale” as ethnic, as a term, correlates from its earliest time and usage as bearing a description of peoples who were viewed as heathen or savage. Be that as it may, cultural musicology is musicology and, as this article will demonstrate through its argumentation, all musicology is cultural. As such its historical roots can be traced to a number
of texts from ancient Greece, India and China, all datable to several centuries BCE. However, the distinct consideration of music as culture is an awareness that grew with the development of ethnomusicology.

To this day the expression has been used implicitly, and some scholars have challenged its validity. In a review of the late Adam Krims’ book *Music and Urban Geography* Philip Bohlman writes:

> If musical text and intertextuality provide Krims’ tools for navigating urban geography today, he necessarily and consciously steers a course that imposes a distance from context, indeed, from most of the cultural stuff that distracted so-called cultural musicologists into believing they were opening their disciplines to phenomena beyond the music…. The practitioners of the musicologies against which he writes, moreover, are also rarely treated as individuals, leaving him to generalize ‘cultural musicology’ as an amorphous, Anglophone collective. (Bohlman 2009: 323-24)

In an email to one of my colleagues he recently expressed his hostility more openly: “to the term cultural musicology, which I see as a concept that scholars who do not do ethnography – the late Gilbert Chase and, now, Larry Kramer, use to find connections to ethnomusicology.” (June 19, 2013)

Gerard Béhague in a recent article denounced the term cultural musicology ‘invented’ by his guru Chase:

> While ethnomusicology was still defined by its main study-object, i.e., oral musics of illiterate societies, or worse “ethnic” musics (an abominable term!), it gradually came to be conceived as a holistic approach to the study of any musical tradition, or at least most ethnomusicologists so wanted to believe. However, as many people of his generation, Chase conceived of ethnomusicology quite restrictively as the study of primitive and tribal music, therefore he did not favor the terminology, as “too narrow and inappropriate for the intended purpose” (presumably the holistic study of American musical traditions). He then proposed the unhappy term “cultural musicology,” by analogy with “cultural anthropology.” Unhappy indeed because musicology does not carry similar branches of anthropology (physical, social, archeology, ethnology, etc.) to justify the qualification “cultural”. (Béhague 2000)

Indeed, ever since I started propagating the idea of a cultural musicology, I have met with rather vicious opposition. It seems some people feel that cultural musicology is a threat to ‘ethnomusicology’ while the latter is a faith to them. Frankly, Béhague’s reasoning doesn’t make any sense to me; do we not have historical, systematic and cognitive musicology, or for that matter biomusicology, paleomusicology and all the other disciplines he names as well? Perhaps the argument that Charles Seeger voiced against ‘ethnomusicology’ as early as 1958 made more sense:

> Do we mean only the study of music in a culture and not in itself? Clearly we must study music both in itself and in culture and this is “musicology.” All music is in culture so why do we need a term like “ethnomusicology?” (Notes and News, report of the 1958 meeting of the SEM, 1959: 101)

This would be a much better argument than Béhague’s, but cultural musicology is not ethnomusicology, and it is certainly not another word for ethnomusicology. Bohlman is right when he says it is amorphous, and in the following we do not think it will become more shapely, though perhaps in what follows much of its inhering ineffability caused by an amorphous nature can be dispelled.

In my keynote for the January 2012 meeting of the Indian Musicological Society I attempted to outline some points of cultural musicology:

The main underlying ideas of a cultural musicology are:

- Cultural musicology can, should and will study any and all music, from any part of the world, art music or popular music, living music or dead music, without distinction.

- Cultural musicology will be organised as the cultural analysis of music: using (primarily) the methods of cultural analysis including:
  - Encounter: Engaging with music
  - Transdisciplinarity (the methodological confusion)
  - Concepts as tools, changing concepts as reflection of meanings

- Central to cultural musicology is the question of meaning:
  - what is the meaning of music
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what does a particular music mean to someone or a group of people (Rousseau’s Rans-de-Vache)

music in the construction of the self and of groups

why do people value music so much (why does music mean)

how does music mean

Musico-logica (cf Kunst and Menezes Bastos), the different lines of musical thinking, have precedence over any attempt to objectivisation or ‘outsider’ description

Musical thinking, music as a knowledge system

The musical analysis of culture, understanding culture through music

Music theory in different cultures

Special attention is given to power relations in music

Patronage

Markets

Music education systems

Criticism/Journalism

The power of music/ music as power

Finally a word about musical analysis. How does a cultural musicologist study music, apart from engaging with it?

In any way we can, but always attempting to use the appropriate method, that is present in the indigenous toolbox

Less attention to formal aspects like broad structures using Schenkerian reductions and looking at chord schemes or progressions

On the contrary, more attention to detail and difference

Importance of digital humanities, computer assisted methods of analysis (Keynote IMS, 2012)

In June 2011 Birgit Abels said in her inaugural speech at the University of Göttingen:

About meaning, encounter and representation

Cultural musicology is concerned with an analytical investigation of the many webs of musical meaning: Music reveals things about ourselves that we cannot experience in any other way … The concept of encounter as deployed by Mieke Bal is crucial to a cultural musicology: not only in the sense of an encounter between different musical cultures, but also in the discursive sense of a reflection on self and other … I like to refer to what we call imaging in cultural analysis, if only I had a word that derives from the auditive rather than the visual.

It has become commonplace to think that the visual predominates over the auditive in cultural and intellectual history. As a musicologist it goes without saying that I am always interested in the sensibilities of hearing and the manifold interrelated meanings of acoustemes–auditive sense-units if you like. But not just on their only, especially also interacting with other senses.

About the postcolonial and power

In a world shaped by colonial history in which colonial structures are much less overcome than we, giving lip-service to post-colonial studies as we do, would like it to be, it is these words – “sinn-voll” (meaning-full) and “sinn-lich” (sensible or sensual) – which, from the perspective of cultural musicology, point at quite a bit of the potential of our discipline. Music makes sense on both the sensual-sensory and the intellectual-cognitive level. In between these levels we localize our reference points and identifications. Not only since, but also because of, the chaos that the colonial project and other, politically or economically motivated hegemonies have left and continue to leave here and there, is music an aesthetic engagement and pleasure; but music and thinking about music are also aesthetic engagement with power in the Foucauldian sense: with power structures, with historical master narratives and with social structures. Music is meaning, music creates meaning, music is very much about meaning. Cultural musicology wants to understand these processes through music, not by circling around music.

About musico-logica’s

Cultural musicology is also interested in other ‘music-ologies’ – or ‘musico-logicas’ – than the institutionalised euro-american universitary musicology. For ways of understanding music, world and man, for ways of thinking about and in music. For the musical dimension of being, and for the manners in which this dimension is thought.

From these insights and formulations by Dr. Abels we shall move backwards in time to examine the works of those who have previously used or adopted the term with or without reference to such a distinctly labelled agenda. There are many examples of people who throw in cultural musicology without intro or
outro, like for instance Edward Crooks, who writes in his PhD John Cage’s Entanglement with the Ideas of Coomaraswamy: “The present investigation will be informed both by Said’s original theory and investigations of Orientalism in recent cultural musicology” (2011: 251). There is no further mention about cultural musicology, but the PhD seems generally relevant to the field.

A more explicit discussion is found in Jelena Gligorijevic’s article Exploring disciplinary boundaries between ethnomusicology and cultural musicology through my own Ph.D. research project, University of Turku, Musicology -

This attempt at situating the musical meaning within two spectacular, large-scale music events (the Exit and Guca festivals) and channeling it through reference to the issues of national identity articulation, brings my Ph.D. research closer to the field of popular music studies and sociology of music, both of which may be understood primarily as the branches of cultural musicology (even though ethnomusicology may also act as a popular music studies’ parent discipline, whereas sociology of music may be affiliated with sociology). (2012: 4)

Actually this seems to make sense, but we readily see how everything is going to depend on definitions. In the last phrase Gligorijevic says “both (cultural) musicology and ethnomusicology” which gives the impression she must be thinking of the new musicology variant of cultural musicology.

One person who used the term cultural musicology quite liberally is the late Adam Krims, whom Bohlman saw fit to criticise for that same reason as indicated above. Below are some quotes from Music and urban Geography (2007)

[…] the (thank-fully) now little-used term new musicology, […] defines itself mainly negatively, not offering a unique characterization of that which it claims to describe. (xxii)

On the contrary, anybody interested in understanding contemporary music production and reception may take at least one cue from so-called cultural musicology, seeing music as a socializing agent with its own complex channeling from, and back into, the organization of society as a whole. Such a characterization admittedly projects a more sociological framework than has generally been fashionable in cultural musicology, which traditionally has tended to underline either music’s hermeneutic value or, more commonly, its contribution to discourses, either conformant or resistant. (xix) [Lawrence Kramer, Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900, 1990, provides an example of the former; Susan McClary, Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality, 1991, provides an example of the latter.]

To those versed in cultural musicology, music’s representational powers may present an obvious case of mediation (although the latter word is rarely invoked in the more postmodern theoretical climate of musicology (xxxvi-xxxvii).

Much of the discussion in this book so far has consciously modified or avoided altogether the cultural studies paradigm that has now found such dominance in cultural musicology. The previous chapters have consistently urged, instead, a consideration of expressive culture that integrates it with other aspects of human life. The notion has been not so much that any instance (including “the economic”) in itself determines the character of musical expression but, rather, that music occurs within, and is conditioned by, a wide range of activities and circumstances that are not in themselves “artistic” (though they may, including the economic, take on many aspects of artistic design). (ibid.)

Though never explicit in defining cultural musicology Krims makes quite clear how he sees it, and in the following, though cultural musicology is not mentioned, his views are further elaborated as music seen from the perspective of cultural studies.

One of the great insights of cultural studies must be maintained, namely its view of expressive culture as a locus of struggle, rather than a reflection of the outcomes of struggles on other fronts (the latter a position often incorrectly identified with Marxism). Cultural studies comprises, to a great extent, an agonistic story about representational struggle. In other words, it addresses the right to construct possibilities for subjectivity and identity, about which kinds of subjects will be hegemonic and which ones will be subaltern—in other words, which ones will rule and which ones will struggle for recognition. Musicology and music theory came late to this eminently postmodern field, and, as suggested above, one cannot reasonably disclaim the exciting results in work ranging from Monteverdi through Schubert to the Village People and Ice Cube; however formulaic the matters of queering this or that, boosting this-or-that subaltern voice, and so forth, may become, some of the more imaginative ventures break such molds or present substantial intellectual matter despite their somewhat rigid outlines … (128-131)
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The volume *Sonic Interventions* (2007) which has as mission statement “Intersecting: Place, Sex, and Race” has a single and somewhat tangential reference to cultural musicology. It is in the chapter “Corporeal Voices, Sexual Differentiations: New Materialist Perspectives on Music, Singing and Subjectivity” that Milla Tiainen sums up some recent developments in musicology citing the development of “post-structuralist impulses” (Tiainen 2007) entering the dialogue as a framework for the inching paradigmatic shifts that have been occurring to the discipline, setting the stage for the emergence of cultural musicology. Yet another instance is in an online article by Annegret Fauser which has the interesting title *Cultural Musicology: New Perspectives on World War II*. The text doesn’t refer to cultural musicology, but the start of the article implicitly gives an idea of what she might have in mind when she describes the ways that musicology’s “pluridiciplinary foundations” open the discourse to the influences of a plethora of methods and epistemologies (Fauser 2011). Probably Lawrence Kramer has been most influential in promoting cultural musicology as the new name for new musicology, although (more recently) he has also suggested critical musicology as an alternative.

...but what was principally new about the musicology formerly known as “New” was its explicit concern with the act of interpretation and with the values inherent in—or the meanings constructed by-it. This kind of interpretive reflexivity, however, had been adumbrated in ethnomusicology before the “New” musicology had been heard of. And it is to the 1970s that one should probably look for the origins and motivations of the “New” musicology… It is conventional to trace it back to Joseph Kerman’s attack, in his 1985 book *Contemplating Music*, on “positivist” musicology… (Kramer 2003)

The Routledge series “critical and cultural musicology”, started in 1999, has the following editorial statement by Martha Feldman:

> Musicology has undergone a seachange in recent years. Where once the discipline knew its limits, today its boundaries seem all but limitless. Its subjects have expanded from the great composers, patronage, manuscripts, and genre formations to include race, sexuality, jazz, and rock; its methods from textual criticism, formal analysis, paleography, narrative history, and archival studies to deconstruction, narrativity, postcolonial analysis, phenomenology, and performance studies. These categories point to deeper shifts in the discipline that have led musicologists to explore phenomena that previously had little or no place in musicology… They have transformed prevailing notions of musical texts, created new analytic strategies, recast our sense of subjectivity, and produced new archives of data. (van Orden 1999)

Another implicit formulation of cultural musicology, with a single reference to the term as such is found in Martin Scherzinger’s article *Music, corporate power and unending war*:

> Although some writers recognize the constitutive role of monopoly capital in music’s production, most recent mediation analysis in musicology has tended to cohere around purely cultural categories such as gender relations, modalities of place, ethnicity, racial labels, age, religious affiliations, political allegiances, sexual codes and sexuality, and so on. Indeed, it is the hermeneutics of music’s heterogeneous and much-contested cultural arena that buttresses a renewed faith in the progressive political efficacy of musicology’s new historicist approaches at the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, this new musicology grounds its progressive claims in the rejection of grand, quasi-evolutionary narratives of music’s historical evolution and the concomitant embrace of differentiated histories with their own peculiar temporalities […] (2005: 26)

To change track here let our focus shift, then, apparently away from formulations of cultural musicology and oblique references thereto by looking again at formulations of other disciplines within the parent category of musicology. The so-called “science” or “study” of music has founded traditions widely and with respect to varied systems of knowledge and by neglecting their history in this article we would also be neglecting their valence in cultural musicology’s foundations and understandings no matter how implicit. In an interesting article on systematic musicology Richard Parncutt positions cultural musicology as follows:

> Systematic musicology is an umbrella term, used mainly in central Europe, for subdisciplines of musicology that are primarily concerned with music in general, rather than specific manifestations of music … Scientific systematic musicology (or scientific musicology) is primarily empirical and data-oriented; it involves empirical psychology and sociology, acoustics, physiology, neurosciences, cognitive sciences, and computing and technology. Humanities systematic musicology (or cultural musicology) involves disciplines and paradigms such as philosophical aesthetics, theoretical sociology, semiotics, hermeneutics, music criticism, and cultural and gender studies. (1)
Parnscutt sees cultural musicology as part of systematic musicology and as such distinct from either ethnomusicology or historical musicology, reminding us of Adler’s scheme in which comparative musicology was a subdiscipline of systematic musicology:

The discipline of systematic musicology is less unified than its sister disciplines historical musicology and ethnomusicology: its contents and methods are more diverse and tend to be more closely related to parent disciplines, both academic and practical, outside of musicology. The origins of systematic musicology in Europe can be traced to ancient Greece; historical musicology and ethnomusicology are much younger disciplines, and the relative importance of the three has fluctuated considerably during the past few centuries. But institutions that bear the label “musicological” (departments, societies, journals, conferences) still tend to focus almost entirely on historical musicology. The future development, and perhaps survival, of musicology will depend on the degree to which musicological institutions can again achieve a balance between musicological subdisciplines, celebrate their diversity and promote constructive interactions between them. (2007: 1)

… cultural musicology, as defined above, is more closely related to historical musicology than to scientific musicology, and may for practical purposes be considered part of “musicology” in the narrow sense of historical musicology:

Leading international representatives of cultural musicology are often also historical musicologists, and vice-versa.
Research in cultural musicology is often presented within the conferences and journals of historical musicology.
Both historical and cultural musicologists are humanities scholars with broadly similar ways of thinking and research methods (at least by comparison to their scientific counterparts).
Both groups focus largely on the music history of western cultural elites. In spite of the changes that their discipline has experienced in recent decades, their main aim is still to understand the great works of the Western canon and their historical, social and cultural contexts. (2007: 5)

Parnscutt is referring to cultural musicology as it was seen by Kramer, or as a new name for ‘new musicology’, oblivious of the angles that Smith and Chase had on cultural musicology. Then, in a similar vein as Seeger’s he observes:

… many historical musicologists continue to believe that the humanities in general, and historical musicology in particular (more precisely: the notated music of Western cultural elites) are central to musicology, just as they were in the 19th Century; the ambiguity of the word “musicology”, which in spite of an extremely eventful century of musicological expansion and diversification can still mean either “all research about all music” or “history of notated music of Western cultural elites”, may be regarded as a reflection of this arrogance. Of course, the notated music of Western cultural elites is no more important or aesthetically valuable than other kinds of music - at least not in any fundamental sense (Cook, 1998) - and the discipline of history is no more important (again, in any fundamental sense) than other disciplines such as anthropology or the parent disciplines of systematic musicology. (2007: 30)

In 2002 Kramer, even before the well-known Musical Times article, had already mentioned cultural musicology in his article “Signs taken for wonders: words, music, and performativity”:

The omitted items include cultural practice, ideology, identity formation, narrativity, race, sexuality, gender and the body among other things - a list of compelling contemporary topics or merely fashionable ones, depending on where one stands… Contrain to certain common objections, cultural musicology has never denied the existence of past interest in ‘extramusical’ or contextual issues. Nor has it shown any lack of interest in, indeed fascination with, the internal dynamics of musical works or genres. But it breaks with earlier approaches, including the ethnomusicological approaches to which it has sometimes been compared, by regarding music not as a vehicle or reflection of a relatively stable set of social, cultural, or historical conditions, but as a form of human agency that shapes and intervenes in such conditions and does so, not exceptionally, but as an ordinary consequence of musical practice. (2002: 36-7)

Susan McClary is a key figure in new musicology and she makes clear how it is related to ethnomusicology in Feminine Endings (1991):

… the anthropological models of cultural analysis developed within ethnomusicology offer ways of understanding musical procedures and philosophies as articulations of social ideologies. And although such approaches have been applied mostly to non-Western and folk traditions, they can also provide extraordinary insights into the beliefs underpinning European art music. To some extent, I regard the interpretive frameworks deployed in Feminine Endings as bringing issues familiar to anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies to the
McClary’s view presents a pleasant balance between the humanities and behavioural sciences. En passant, she explains how feminist theory played an important role in new musicology.

Kerman’s *Contemplating Music (also known as Musicology, 1985)* sent some shockwaves through the world of musicology. Or so people seem to think at least, the book is often referred to as the beginning of ‘new musicology’. The book is a criticism of a tendency in musicology to focus too strictly on the analysis of the musical text—the score—its inner workings and structures, without much attention for the relation of music to the rest. In contemplating the tradition of autonomous music one is reminded of John Cage who says “music is music, and the rest is the rest”. Indeed, many musicians and musicologists alike consider music to be ‘just’ music, and we can see that the idea of absolute music, that emerged and became a pre-eminent paradigm in 19th-century Germany is still with us today. Modern musicology was shaped in the same time and place, and this blinkered view remained at the core of musicology for over a century. Of course, it is a monument to the stupidity of musicologists to think that music could be autonomous. Throughout history and throughout the world, music is deeply intertwined with culture, and culture with music. As McClary noted, new musicology was influenced by ethnomusicology in reframing music as culture, and so Kramer’s suggestion of renaming new musicology as cultural musicology is quite understandable. Kerman professes not to be interested in any other music but ‘western classical’, and he insists on the Eurocentric colonial terminology in which musicology is exclusively the study of that music, but he devotes a whole chapter to ‘ethnomusicology or cultural musicology’ in which his discourse betrays a profound antagonism to the field and its representatives. In the following quotes we will italicise a few passages to illustrate these instances in his dialogue:

> Seeger a sort of utopian communist …. (161)
> This is another reason why Seeger is very much to my purpose: for as I confessed at the outset of this book, I too am not very interested in non-Western music. (162)
> We need also waste little time with Blacking’s rather portentous claim that only after understanding Venda music of the Transvaal has he been able to understand Western music properly. One is glad for Blacking; but he has not done anything to help us with Western music… (167)
> There are really only a limited number of areas - such as oral transmission and concepts of mode - where ethnomusicological research itself can impinge directly on the study of Western music. Western music is just too different from other musics, and its cultural contexts too different from other cultural contexts. The traditional alliance of musicology has been with the humanistic disciplines, such as history, criticism, and philology, not with the social sciences. (174)

Kerman’s observation that ethnomusicology has not helped much in the study of ‘Western music’ should not really surprise us, and his remark that it is not for lack of trying is really curious. In reality, the ethnomusicological tradition has always focussed on ‘other music’, the music of the ‘rest’, and attempts to apply ethnomusicological methods to study European classical music are quite exceptional. The whole point Kerman misses is precisely what McClary brings forward, the relevance of the ‘anthropological models for cultural analysis’ and not what ethnomusicologists have to say about ‘Western music’. In passing we want to insist also on another typical characteristic of Kerman’s discourse— whenever he says Western music he definitely does not include pop music or jazz in that description. For Kerman, musicology is the study of Western music and Western music is defined as the elite tradition of Europe and its satellites. His remark that ‘Western music is just too different’ is also highly symptomatic of his mentality, stressing the fettered discipline he represents. One is reminded of the classical anthropological adage that “if you know only one
culture, you don’t know any culture at all”. What Kerman says about ‘Western music’ can absolutely be said about any music. More to the point, we cannot generalise in this way about any music and still be considered to be holding a dialogue that is more than pejorative and shallow in its attempts to “understand” these musics. Defining or demarcating something as ‘Western music’ becomes a useless program when we consider the hybrid planetary nature of our world. Where are the boundaries in time and in place? Which peoples and cultures take part in this? And where are the boundaries between the popular music of the common man and the art music of the elite?

Conservative musicologists like Kerman seem to be stuck in the 19th century, and they have fought throughout the 21st century to defend what they considered their turf, much in the same way he has defined it. Kerman derived his idea of cultural musicology from Gilbert Chase who wrote:

The term “ethnomusicology” seems rather restrictive in the context of its wide geographical, temporal, and cultural scope. […] I favor the idea of an “ethnomusicology” of Western music; but I do not favor the terminology [...]. What we need is a term of larger scope that will contain the same idea—namely, the sociocultural approach to musicology. For this I propose the term “cultural musicology”—by analogy with “cultural anthropology.” (1975, 1972)

As we saw above, Chase’s student Béhague saw fit to criticise his mentor for inventing this ‘unhappy’ term, although the grounds for his criticism can effectively be challenged. We share Chase’s discomfort with the term ethnomusicology but his reasoning is about as thin as Kunst’s underpinning of ethnomusicology. Both Kunst and Chase seem to think a one-liner is enough to tackle the matter. More importantly, though Chase couldn’t google the term to gain the information, he wasn’t the first to have invented it. As early as 1959 Fidelis Smith wrote:

Musicology, as theory, historical research and critical analysis, cannot do without the reality of music itself, and not merely by itself but as understood in the total cultural web of its particular period. In order to understand music fully, we must also do research and creative thinking in philosophy and the esthetics of world culture, in which music is an important factor. This type of musicology, which presupposes training in music, music theory and research techniques, perhaps could be called “speculative.” But that word has been worn rather thin. Another possibility would be “esthetico-musicology;” but a better term would be “cultural musicology.” (164)

Smith’s article is really a very rich reflection, and since it is so hard to find we will make it available for readers via a link. Here are some quotes to demonstrate the intensity and general trend of his reasoning:

Hence there can be no musicology for musicology’s sake. Musicology, as theory, historical research and critical analysis, cannot do without the reality of music itself, and not merely by itself but as understood in the total cultural web of its particular period. Yet this is not enough. (161)

In order to understand music fully, we must also do research and creative thinking in philosophy and the esthetics of world culture, in which music is an important factor. (162)

This work embodies the theories of the writer concerning: a theory of scholarship in musicology; language, thought and reality as a preamble to cultural musicology; time, being and music; consonance- dissonance as an esthetic problem; tensor being and creativity in composition; a critique of a metaphysics of the arts and world culture; the esthetics of music as a life semantic. (ibid fn 41)

… such subjects as the “materials” of music, the basis of musical communication, form as a value notion, form in music as a time pattern, the study of creativity as an historical interrelation between God and the artist, the importance of cultural background in musical interpretation, the sociology of musical life, and even historical-analytical studies such as Kant’s music aesthetic, or the question of Herder’s founding of musical esthetics as such. Further problems and questions would be concerned with the phenomenology of music, the iconic signs in esthetics, the problem of meaning in music and the arts; symbolism in music, semiotic esthetics, the relation between speech and music and the allied arts. (162-3)

As far as the present writer is aware, no one has attempted to name this branch of musicology. It is not so much a branch as a window from which one views the intellectual struggles going on all around and trying to absorb what one can into one’s speciality. In other words it is a question of trying to approach reality as it is: one gigantic and patterned entity, even though one does so from one’s own limited viewpoint. (164)
The problem which the musician-musicologist-philosopher is trying to solve is this: how to adjust his sights to total reality, to total "validity" in its total cultural complex. To do this thoroughly he must also consider the relation between thought and language. (165-6)

In studying music and its philosophy, one faces reality in a creative way, whether as interpreter of the musical patterns of world culture, or as a composer who molds and creates new possibilities, be he composer of thought or of sound or of both. In this way, musicology does not remain learnedly impotent but becomes existentially productive in a world culture, integrated in and centered upon the full reality of life... (168)

Smith’ article has a ring to it one could classify as contemporary given the quantity of sources I have quoted prior to its introduction here. Even more striking, however, is that he does not mention ethnomusicology at all, and apart from Sachs he mentions no scholar in the ethno-/comparative tradition. Vice versa, no one seems to have ever noted Smith, probably because he didn’t publish in mainstream journals. Still, it goes to show how even academics reproduce a canon of journalistic research and then spend their time parroting each other. Before Smith, there is to my knowledge only a spurious reference to “musicologie culturelle” in the Revue of 1936 mentioned earlier.

Prehistory of cultural musicology: 1985-1765 (new musicology, world music studies, ethnomusicology, popular music studies, comparative musicology, musical ethnography, national music studies)

OVERHEARD THAT…
The department of music of the University of Gorakhpur has opened a course in Ethnomusicology focussing on 18th century Italian opera (Bel 1985: 51)

It was in 1963 that the music historian Claude Palisca prophesied, in a widely disseminated symposium on the future of the discipline, that the next big development was going to be (as he later put it) "the application of ethnomusicological method to historical studies of Western music, that is, how music functions at all levels of a culture". In the fifty years since then, his prophecy has been handsomely confirmed. (Cook 2008: 48)

As we have discussed above, the term cultural musicology has historically been linked to both ethnomusicology and new musicology, and though these disciplines seem to be worlds apart it is demonstrably the cultural in cultural musicology that links them. As we have also shown new musicology emerged as a 'cultural turn' in musicology, in reaction to the absolutistic approach that reigned supreme in European music studies from its inception until the last quarter of the twentieth century. But ethnomusicology is only one angle or lens in this view. Jaap Kunst considered ethnomusicology a 'better term' for comparative musicology and traced its history to Ellis article on scales from 1884. As my colleague Joep Bor (1995, 2008) has demonstrated in painstaking detail (and his research has been reiterated since by many) the history of this type of research goes back much further, in world music studies (ca. 1920), popular music studies (19th century), musical ethnography (19th century), general histories of music (18th century), and last but not least the travellers who reported extensively and intensively on music during their voyages: Amiot in China (1789), Willard in India (1834), Burney in Europe (1776) and Villoteau in Egypt (1809).

The history of ethnomusicology itself is usually traced to Jaap Kunst, who coined the term to replace the older comparative musicology. In 1950 Jaap Kunst wrote:

To the question: what is the study-object of comparative musicology, the answer must be: mainly the music and the musical instruments of all non-European peoples, including both the so-called primitive peoples and the civilized Eastern nations. Although this science naturally makes repeated excursions into the field of European music, the latter is, in itself, only an indirect object of its study. The name of our science is, in fact, not quite characteristic; it does not ‘compare’ any more than any other science. A better name, therefore, is that appearing on the title page of this book: ethno-musicology.

In the third edition of 1959 this changes to:

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

The changes seem small, but they are quite interesting; in 1950 he starts out from comparative musicology and mentions ethnomusicology afterwards, in 1959 this is reversed. Then he drops ‘Eastern’ from ‘civilised Eastern nations’ and the European/non-European becomes Western/non-Western. New to the wording here is the sociological turn and, quite remarkably, the introduction of acculturation/hybridisation. Finally, and possibly most importantly, the spatial demarcation is much more emphatic——Western art- and popular (entertainment) music, are beyond the domain of ethnomusicology. Still, he clings to the Sachian unilinear evolutionism, stressing that the music of ‘other’ cultures is important for knowing ‘our own’ music of the past, although at the same time he stresses the unique qualities of the ‘higher musical forms of expression of the Asiatic civilised nations…which are difficult to understand for us Westerners’. We are stressing Kunst’s demarcation of the discipline in regional terms because this has remained a tenet of ethnomusicology, in spite of incidental efforts to show that ethnomusicological research on Mozart (Nettl 1989) or Gregorian chant (Jeffery 1992) is a viable option (although Kerman didn’t think so, 1985). Cultural musicology, like any other orientation in musicology, has music as its object of investigation. Cultural musicology needs to be able to, and indeed can, engage with any kind of music, but it does not limit itself to researching music. It is equally concerned with research on ideas about music and the processes and patterns of musical thinking or thinking musically (‘musico-logica’).

Kunst’s tracing the history of ethnomusicology exclusively to comparative musicology, and starting at Alexander Ellis’ in 1884, is very irrational and arbitrary as has been shown by Bor. The term ethnomusicology may have been coined by Kunst, but similar ideas were already around for quite some time. The Polish musicologist Łucjan Kamieński used the terms etnomuzykologia and etnomuzykologizny (ethnomusicological), as well as etnografia muzyczna and etnologia muzyczna as early as 1929 (Steszewski 1992, 1995). Long before these specific formulations we come across terminology that is very similar and refers to the same branch of learning; in English it is called ‘the ethnological study of music’ (Myers 1907), and in French ‘ethnographie musicale’ (Tiersot 1905, Kraus 1879). At once then we understand that the origins of this tradition are to be found in ethnography itself, and as Bor has pointed out, tracing it to Adler seems non-sensical (Bor 1995). The traditions of ethnography/logy and anthropology go back to the late 18th century with Alexandre-César Chavannes 1787 as a main reference. However, in Göttingen, Germany the equivalent Völkerkunde (also Volks-kunde) was already used by Schlözer in 1771/72. He actually also used the terms Ethnographie, ethnographisch and Ethnograph (Vermeulen 1995). To apply the ideas of ethnography to music was but a small and logical step, but again, terminology is not the only thing. As Lévi-Strauss argued eloquently, we could very well consider Jean-Jacques Rousseau the founder of anthropology, and again there, the suggestion made by Baud-Bovy (below) to call Rousseau the first ethnomusicologist is very plausible when one approaches the idea form the standpoints of both terminology and method. As usual, we would have to do some serious essentialising to say that a particular discipline started at a particular time and place and was initiated by a particular person. Knowledge, like cultural or living organisms, evolves in many gradual steps, and rarely, if ever, as a big bang. As my colleague Vetter remarked one day, commenting on Goodall’s Big Bang of notation “a revolution that stretched over 600 years” (see Goodall 2001).

It is likely that if we go beyond the European archeology of these disciplines we can trace many strands elsewhere that show similar developments and even influenced the European tradition directly or indirectly. In the 1950s the idea of ethnomusicology caught on quite rapidly, and in 1958 there were some very interesting exchanges during the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology:

Mr. Kolinski: “The Scope and Aims of Ethnomusicology,” There is a difficulty with our name: it suggests that our field is the music of foreign cultures. A Korean student might call the study of Mozart “ethnomusicology.” World music as scholarly study should be approached as one over-all discipline.

Mr. Seeger: “Musicology and Ethnomusicology,” “Ethnomusicology” has the connotation of “strange” or “foreign.” Do we mean only the study of music in a culture and not in itself? Clearly we must study music both in itself and in culture and this is “musicology.” All music is in culture so why do we need a term like “ethnomusicology?” The reason is that historians have hijacked the proper term, “musicology.” Yet they study only a very narrow band of world music and only part of that. They have turned their backs on the only primary source and limit themselves to secondary sources … For the future: We must make our domain world music,
including all of Euro-American music, not only folk, popular and tribal music. This includes the fine art … We must learn the critical standards of other peoples and approach their music with their canons, not our own (Seeger).

McAllester: I want to study culture through the avenue of music, to study music as social behavior. Music is essentially a matter of values rather than a matter of notes … The great lesson that our informants teach us in the field is admiration and respect. This depth of appreciation is necessary to induce us to spend the years that are necessary to learn a music … Music is not only a good avenue to the understanding of cultural values, it may well be the best.

Meyer: The point is, it is not how we analyze it but how the native musicians analyze it. The grammar of a music must be discovered from the musician’s concept. But there is more: 1) the purely cultural, in which sense the vocabulary of music varies from culture to culture 2) an overall syntax that may be applied to all music … This may be a universal value in music, but the kinds of information vary culturally. We must talk to people to find out how they feel music is articulated. (Notes and News 1959)

The roadmap that Charles Seeger outlines here would be very much at the centre of a cultural musicology. McAllester’s remark, that he wants to study culture through the avenue of music returns to an idea of Krims where he states that ‘music is a window on culture’ (personal communication March 2012). Finally, Meyer stresses the importance of analysing music from the ‘native’ perspective, adding to it an interesting note on culturally specific and universal aspects of music, an issue that was revived only a few years ago. The ‘composer, guitar player and ethnomusicologist’ Hugo Leonardo Ribeiro collected a large number of definitions of ethnomusicology (2013) ordered chronologically in order of moving towards the present. Below is a selection:

Nettl, Bruno. 1956. … ethnomusicology, the science that deals with the music of peoples outside of Western civilization.

Schaeffner, André. 1956. Ethnologie musicale ou musicologie comparée? … nothing in its name specified that comparative musicology must study non-European musics. But it is interested essentially in these.

Merriam, Alan P. 1960. … the study of music in culture.

Nettl, Bruno. 1961. Ethnomusicology … [is] … the study of non-Western music and, to an extent, … folk music. … Greenway, John. 1962. … the systematic study of music as it is manifested among the more primitive and unfamiliar peoples of the world. …

List, George. 1962. Ethnomusicology is to a great extent concerned with music transmitted by unwritten tradition.

Nketia, J. H. Kwabena. 1962. The study of music as a universal aspect of human behavior is becoming increasingly recognized as the focus of Ethnomusicology.

List, George. 1963. [Ethnomusicology is] the study of aurally transmitted music.

Nettl, Bruno. 1965. … it is a sort of borderline area between musicology and anthropology.

Gillis, Frank. 1969. (Ethnomusicology is) the study of those world musics which are aurally transmitted.

Hood, Mantle. 1969. Ethnomusicology is an approach to the study of any music, not only in terms of itself but also in relation to its cultural context.

Wachsmann, K. P. 1969. … ethnomusicology is concerned with the music of other peoples. … The prefix ‘ethno’ draws attention to the fact that this musicology operates essentially across cultural boundaries of one sort or another; and that, generally, the observer does not share directly the musical tradition that he studies.

List, George. 1969. … ethnomusicology in the broadest sense as the study of traditional music. What does the term ‘traditional music’ mean? … it is transmitted and diffused by memory rather than through the use of writing, and it is music which is always in flux, in which a second performance of the same item differs from the first.

List, George. 1971. Ethnomusicology is conceived as an interdisciplinary study in which approaches derived from many disciplines can be usefully applied.

Chenoweth, Vida. 1972. Ethnomusicology is the study of the musical practices of a particular people.
Resonating Cultural Musicology; sources, streams and issues

Wim van der Meer and Rebecca Erickson

Blacking, John. 1973. Ethnomusicology is a comparatively new word which is widely used to refer to the study of the different musical systems of the world.

Merriam, Alan P. ca 1973. Ethnomusicology is the study of music as culture.

Blacking, John. 1974. The discipline is concerned chiefly with ‘ethnic’ or ‘folk’ music and thus tends to be an area study. The methods used are generally anthropological and sociological, or musicological.

Nettl, Bruno. 1975. [Ethnomusicology is] the study of all music, from the point of view of its oral tradition . . .

In 1956, just a couple of years after Kunst had invented the word, Alain Daniélou gave a lecture on ethnomusicology in India. One of the things he stressed immediately was that ethnomusicology should not limit itself to ‘primitive’ music:

It is wrong to believe that Ethno-musicology means the study of tribal or primitive music and that the established systems of art-music are too lofty to be probed into with the help of modern measuring instruments. In fact, the technical study of the particularities of musical systems, as they actually are, and not as musicians believe they are - is an enormous asset for the disentanglement of the pure, the essential, aspects of a particular system of music from the accretions due to outside imports and influences. The music of Europe would be much healthier if its theorists were more aware of its origin, its possibilities of development and the use of such possibilities in the musical systems of other parts of the world. (33)

Daniélou was a staunch ‘fan’ of India and considered Indian music (and religion - he embraced Hinduism) superior to European music, but he held some views that we would not easily share nowadays. One of them is the obsession with purity, the other is the idea that we can know the “particularities of musical systems, as they actually are, and not as musicians believe they are.” Like Béhague (above), Stobart has stressed that ethnomusicology should not be seen as the study of ethnic music, but rather as the ethnography of music. However, when we look at the definitions above it becomes clear that for many scholars ethnomusicology is really all about ethnic music. Stobart’s point is not very convincing, for what does that ‘ethno-’ do in the ethnography of music? If we go back to the term that was so current in the French literature of the late 19th century – ethnographie musicale – we must conclude that it does refer to the study of ethnic or foreign music. Garcin de Tassy for instance, in his Chansons populaire de l’Inde, speaks of ‘chansons ethnologiques’, "that refer to some usage particular to India (1854: 4). The term 'ethnographie musicale' is already common by the middle of the 19th century, the term ‘musique populaire’ is established as opposite to art music in France in the early 19th century (and met with already around 1680). In the English language the ancient Greek concept of 'ethnic' was translated as 'national' and studies on national music started appearing already by the middle of the 18th century. Burney told Rousseau, whom he greatly admired, when they met in 1773, that he was planning a book on national musics of the world, a project that never came to fruition (Green 2009, Gelbart 2007, Bor 2008). In Germany, Martin Greve’s article on the “notwendigen Verschwinden der Musiketnologie” (inevitable vanishing of ethnomusicology), followed by an indignant response by the German ‘Musiketnologen’ (Klenke 2003), made clear how profoundly split the field is between the traditional ethnomusicologists and the ‘world music students’, as Bor has proposed to call them. The situation in the Netherlands is similar, and led to renaming the ‘Netherlands society for ethnomusicology’ to ‘Netherlands society for the study of the performing arts world wide’. The background to this whole discussion is, on the one hand a growing discomfort with the ‘ethno-’ prefix, but on the other hand also with the mindset of ethnomusicologists. Let me first come back to the idea of an ‘ethnography of music’, as Stobart calls it. If we look up some definitions of ethnography we find:

- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: The branch of anthropology that deals with the scientific description of specific human cultures.
- Collins Dictionary: the branch of anthropology that deals with the scientific description of individual human societies.
- Vocabulary.com: Ethnography is a type of anthropology that involves studying people in a particular society or culture by observing them in their natural setting. A student of ethnography might live in Moscow to gather information about Russian marriage practices. First appearing in 1834, the noun ethnography combines the word ethno, meaning “race, culture,” and graph, meaning “writing.” If you study ethnography, you typically collect information through first-hand observation by participating in the society or culture you’re studying.
For example, as an ethnography student you might research the religious practices of an African tribe by living among the tribe members and taking part in their rituals and ceremonies.

- Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, 11th Edition: (1) the study of human races and cultures (2) the study and systematic recording of human cultures; also: a descriptive work produced from such research. Descriptive study of a particular human society. Contemporary ethnography is based almost entirely on fieldwork. The ethnographer lives among the people who are the subject of study for a year or more, learning the local language and participating in everyday life while striving to maintain a degree of objective detachment. He or she usually cultivates close relationships with “informants” who can provide specific information on aspects of cultural life. While detailed written notes are the mainstay of fieldwork, ethnographers may also use tape recorders, cameras, or video recorders. Contemporary ethnographies have both influenced and been influenced by literary theory.

- Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 4th Ed.: the branch of anthropology that deals descriptively with specific cultures, esp. those of nonliterate peoples or groups.

- Online Plain Text English Dictionary: that branch of knowledge which has for its subject the characteristics of the human family, developing the details with which ethnology as a comparative science deals; descriptive ethnology. See Ethnology.

The parent term, ethnology, had been banned by many anthropologists precisely because of the ‘ethnic’ ring to it, and the strong association with the concept of race. Even in contemporary definitions this link is still clearly felt:

- American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: (1) the science that analyses and compares human cultures, as in social structure, language, religion, and technology; cultural anthropology. (2) the branch of anthropology that deals with the origin, distribution, and characteristics of human racial groups.

- Collins English Dictionary: the branch of anthropology that deals with races and peoples, their relations to one another, their origins, and their distinctive characteristics.

The problem of ethnology (and ethnography for that matter is perhaps best described by Michel de Certeau in his “Culture au pluriel”, when he asserted: “La culture au singulière est devenue une mystification politique. Elle est mortifère. (p. 122) (Culture in the singular has become a political mystification. It is lethal.) He continues, in the chapter on “The imperialism of ethnological knowledge”:

There truly is a link between ethnology and the desire for centralisation and/or colonisation. The colonising countries have always been real deniers of culture.

Ethnology is not innocent. It represents one of the forms of colonisation. I have analysed this on the level of popular culture: the interest ethnology has in popular culture has as its postulate a relation of forces between the bourgeoisie the ethnologists belong to and the masses that become the object of their observation. (133-35, italics in original)

We have enjoyed reading works by scholars like Stobart, Bohlman and Béhague and feel that a large part of it would be much better designated by cultural musicology than by ethnomusicology or, as they define their work, ethnography of music. So why are they so committed to this imperialist, colonialist term? Of course, they would have to answer that question themselves, but one reason might be a matter of branding, a symbol of identity, a selling point. The acid criticism of Rajiv Parrikar comes to mind:

Incidentally, I myself had once devised a classification scheme for a good ethnopimp, a bad ethnopimp, an unworthy ethnopimp and a plain pimp. The lines distinguishing them were found to be invisible to the naked eye. For the benefit of the uninformed, “ethnopimps” refers to that despicable breed of men and women who call themselves “ethnomusicologists.” They are usually found loitering in the music departments of American, Canadian and Western European universities, collecting salaries without putting in even a day’s worth of honest work (not unlike many other humanities ‘professors’ at Western universities). (http://www.parrikar.org/hindustani/ramrang-bouquet/ accessed September 13, 2013)

His generalisation about the work ethos of humanities professors is misinformed, although shared by many. Since, moreover, these departments usually are a breeding ground of left-wing culture critics the prejudice prevails especially in reactionary, populist and nationalist circles. However, we are not interested in Parrikar’s prejudice, but his use of the term pimp making allusion to the idea that the ethnomusicologist is prostituting the music they study, they are selling something that should not be traded for money.
Far more important than the question of terminology, is the problem of the mindset of ethnomusicologists. As is the case with all humanities and behavioural sciences, underlying assumptions and methodologies are closely interconnected with cultural history. In his inaugural speech Joep Bor (2008) traces in concise format, but with considerable detail, the development of European (and later Anglo-American) thinking about the musics and dances of the world. We would briefly like to put his analysis of this process in a perspective of cultural history. The early travellers, in the time in which trade and exploration was the main activity of Europeans around the world, generally showed a mixture of curiosity and shock with the ‘barbarian’ customs and cultures, including music, they encountered. As domination and colonisation became more important, disdain started to prevail over curiosity. Under the influence of Renaissance thinking, the idea that contemporary ‘primitives’ represented forerunners to European ‘fully developed’ man became a thread that would play a major role in comparative musicology from the late nineteenth until deep into the twentieth century. In 1961 Walter Wiöra still very explicitly adhered to this theory (Bor 2008: 36-7). But Wiöra was a fossil at that time and very few of his contemporary colleagues would still uphold such unilinear evolutionism. Under the influence of Boasian relativism, the idea of comparison itself had become an unspeakable notion in anthropology and Jaap Kunst’s suggestion to replace the name comparative musicology with ethnomusicology was indeed inspired by the idea that we “don’t compare any more than any other science” (see above). The idea of superiority and universality of European art music had been under fire already for much longer starting with independence movements and the beginnings of the decolonisation process. For, contrary to Wiöra’s statement that

Western music has done for mankind something similar to what Greek sculpture, architecture, logic, and mathematics did: it strongly set forth classic fundamentals of universal character [...] This [...] explains the diffusion of Western music today in all parts of the earth. Its ‘world empire’ rests essentially upon its immanent universality. (in Bor 2008: 36)

it has been colonial domination that spread ‘Western music’, not its immanent universality. In India, for instance, it was not only the Indian Nationalists who were propagating the equality—and even superiority—of Indian music over European music, but also Europeans who sympathised with the independence movement, Alain Daniélou (1907 –1994) being perhaps the best known example. Of course, there were much earlier mavericks who felt that India had little to learn from Europe, like Charles Stuart (c. 1758 –1828).

Interestingly, Augustus Willard’s famous book on Indian music from 1834, barely mentions European music, and equally interestingly, his work was received with some disbelief by European musicologists. The split between ethnomusicology and world music studies in the 1980s has been discussed earlier in this paper, but it should be noted here that it reflects a major shift in cultural history. This is the period in which the high/low art distinction got its penultimate blow when authenticity and truthfulness were debunked and when hybridity broke through. Ethnomusicologists had a ‘tradition’ of disdain of the inauthentic–Indian film music as a conspicuous example. World music scholars saw the ethnomusicologists in that perspective: bearded, armed with tape-recorders, hunting for dying sounds of tribes in the bushes. And a shadow was cast over the very idea of fieldwork, as the title and contents of the book by Barz and Cooley (1997) imply. But still, the habit of going into the field with tape-recorders and cameras, handled by heroic white Anglo-Americans and Europeans (and the Japanese are also joining the game), to interview and record ‘the coloured others’ continues, and it still looks exactly as colonial as it did a hundred years ago. It is aptly called ethnography of music. World music scholars on the other hand went native, much like Alain Daniélou had done, striving to master a music fully by becoming disciples of local masters. Let me assert here that the distinction between ethnomusicologists and world music students/scholars is not hermetic. There certainly are people who have done everything to master a music and yet call themselves ethnomusicologists, but they are rare. For one thing, an important difference between ethnomusicology and world music studies is that the latter had a much clearer focus on the aesthetics of this musics which presented themselves as “other”.

Ethnomusicology, especially in its garb of musical anthropology or anthropology of music, studied the social functions of music, and rarely the aesthetics. In ethnomusicology the idea of music as an art has been challenged: lullabies, harvest songs, and the like primarily support other activities rather than fulfil autonomous artistic ideals. But even then there is art in such music, and however simple certain music may sound to the outsider the insiders have very strong feelings about doing it right or wrong, about aesthetics, about how to do it at all, and it is the engagement at the social level with these feelings and thoughts about their music which renders an aesthetic both visible to another and viable to the society at all. The turmoil
that haunted anthropology in the late 1970s, caused by people like James Clifford and Clifford Geertz slowly and almost unnoticeably affected ethnomusicology too. New musicology meant quite a revolution to musicology in the 1980s, but there was also a ‘new ethnomusicology’, at least according to Charles Hamm:

Thus what might be called the “new ethnomusicology” is largely concerned with contemporary styles and genres generated by interactions of different music cultures, now accepting the process as a positive one. (2004: 200)

The imposition of European classical and missionary music with colonisation (and North Atlantic pop music with neo-colonialism) and the subsequent identification of musicology with that music led to the anomalous situation where in many countries around the world the musical traditions of people native to that culture continue to be studied under the misnomer of ethnomusicology. Musicology and ethnomusicology seem to be the last vestige of the colonial mindset.

Many ethnomusicologists maintain that ethnomusicology should be understood as the ethnography of music, not the study of ethnic music(s). This reasoning does not eliminate the stale odour that emanates from the ethno- prefix in any way. Checking dictionary meanings of the terms ethnology and ethnography confirm this (and don’t forget to check the urban dictionary on ethnic), but it doesn’t change the fact that there are hosts of real-world ‘ethnographies’ as well as hand-books of the ethnographical method. A definition that perhaps summarises ethnography well is the systematic description of a single contemporary culture often through fieldwork.

The term ‘ethnography’ generally refers to data derived from direct observation of behaviour in a particular society. It was a research method initially developed within social anthropology to tackle the problems of studying ‘other’ cultures, but it has become more popular across a wide variety of disciplines, and the range of methods and terms used to discuss research of an ethnographic type has become rather broad. (Cohen 1993: 123)

The written description of different peoples and their customs […]: including articles, fieldnotes, monographs, and websites. The term covers both the object produced […] and the processes and methods of producing it… (Morris 2012: 85)

But if we take ethnography to signify something that has nothing to do with ethno- or ethnic then we may wonder why keep the term? The question is what alternatives are available? Ethnography is usually associated with fieldwork, participant (or direct) observation. The premises and practices of fieldwork are very questionable, and also, the word seems rather funny, with a curious ring of agrarian or military activity. But all that will be discussed at length in a separate article. Running out of doxographical options perhaps we could speak of ‘live research’, as opposed to archive research. Of course, much live research is done with the help of tools for creating archives (sound, image, text), and the output of live research is often based on those records.

But let us go back a little further in time, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It was his critical attitude towards ‘civilisation’ in general and European civilisation in particular that made his vantage point so very different from other thinkers. Regarding music there had been, and would be for a long time, two types of attitudes towards non-European music; one was total rejection, it was all abject noise, and the other was one of taking interest in it as it might reveal something about the origins and evolution of ‘our own’ music. In both cases, ‘our own music’ was regarded as superior, as a final goal towards which all music would and should aspire. The latter attitude was still very prevalent among comparative musicologists of the first half of the twentieth century, in fact we can say that it was the main objective of comparison. There had been rare exceptions, and perhaps we can credit Jaap Kunst with a fundamental change in attitude, in the sense that he described the music he heard in Jogjakarta as follows:

Deze Oostersche muziek is uiterst gecompliceerd en heeft zoo geheel andere wegen bewandeld dan de Westersche; Toen ik haar met Kerstmis 1919 voor het eerst - en toevallig in de hoogste volmaaktheid, nl. aan het Pakoe Alamsche hof te Jogjakarta - te horen kreeg, begreep ik er niet veel van, maar zij was van een verbijsterende klankenpracht en heeft mij dien nacht urenlengt in haar greep gehouden. (1942: 29)

This Oriental music is extremely complicated and took such completely different directions from Western...
When I first heard it, at Christmas 1919, by coincidence and performed in the highest perfection, at the Paku Alam court at Jogjakarta, I did not understand it very well, but it was of such an amazing sonic beauty that it kept me spellbound for hours that night (transl. W. van der Meer).

Rousseau might never have heard any music from India, China or Indonesia, but his critical remark on music based on harmony, which became so predominant in Europe, is quite interesting:

que toute notre Harmonie n’est qu’une invention gothique et barbare dont nous ne nous fussions jamais avisés, si nous eussions été plus sensibles aux véritables beautés de l’Art, et à la Musique vraiment naturelle.

As Baud-Bovy observes, Rousseau was a ‘mélodiste’ or even a ‘monodiste’, and we imagine he would have enjoyed Indian or Arabic music a great deal. Interestingly, a very similar line of argumentation was followed in 1763 by Brown, who strongly believed in the superiority of the ancient Greek way of combining music and poetry, discusses the same in several other cultures and finally comes up with a section on the ‘possible re-union of poetry and music. Little could he have supposed that Hanslick (1854) a century later would rigorously raze to the ground such ideas. Rousseau, with music as with other subjects, rarely wrote promotional material, most of his writing is strictly analytical and when he passes value judgements they usually are critical observations. His critical attitude to the culture he grew up with, including the musical culture, was probably the reason why he took so much interest in different kinds of music. His enthusiasm over Burney’s project to write a volume on national music (Green 2009: 165) is evidence to this, as was his research on the cowherd’s songs (ranz-des-vaches).

Si Claude Lévi-Strauss a pu affirmer «sans crainte d’être démenti» que Rousseau, «un plein siècle avant qu’elle ne fit son apparition, avait conçu, voulu et annoncé l’ethnologie», on doit également lui reconnaître le mérite d’avoir pressenti une discipline plus récente encore, l’ethnomusicologie. C’est à la fois l’attrait qu’exerçait sur lui la pure mélodie et sa conviction que toute culture est artificielle qui l’amena à considérer que la musique harmonique de l’Europe occidentale n’était pas un langage universel. (Baud-Bovy 1988: 84)

If Claude Lévi-Strauss was able to say, “without fear of contradiction,” that Rousseau, “a full century before its appearance conceived, intended, and announced ethnology,” then one should equally recognize and credit his having also more recently presented the world with ethnomusicology. It was through the attraction exerted on him by pure melody and his conviction that all culture is artificial which led him to consider that the harmonic music of Western Europe was not a universal language. (Baud-Bovy 1988: 84 translated : R.C. Erickson)

Finally, we will reproduce an oft cited passage which remains of great relevance to this day:

In order to put the Reader in a position to judge the various musical Accents of Peoples, I have transcribed a Chinese Tune taken from Father du Halde, a Persian Tune taken from the Chevalier Chardin, and two Chansons of the American Savages taken from Father Mersenne. A conformity of Modulation with our Music will be found in all these pieces which will possibly make some admire the goodness and universality of our rules, and for others will perhaps render suspect the intelligence or the fidelity of those who have transmitted these Tunes to us. (Rousseau 1998 [1749]: 444-5)

Protohistories (and possible directions) of cultural musicology

We uphold the idea that musicology should be seen in a broad perspective in thinking or theorising about and reflecting on music. We also proffer that throughout time and space in as far as we know it, this activity has taken two directions; music theory, the structure and working of music, and the ideas about the relation of music to society and the surrounding world in all its forms. We come across these ideas in many, if not all, cultures, and certainly in many of the early writings about music. In ancient Greece, China and India both directions are well developed, the names of Pythagoras, Aristoxenos and Plato are of course known to most of us in Europe, but the Indian and Chinese traditions are also very rich in texts on both music theory and theories about the place of music in society and the world. Mukund Lath has insightfully written about these different traditions and the ‘music logos’ they represent (1998: 267ff).

Much like Fidelis Smith, we would consider the second direction of reflections on music to be a proto cultural musicology. And while we are at it, the first direction is systematic musicology or music theory. So what about historical musicology? Apparently the study of the history of music is a more recent
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phenomenon. Throughout the ages there have been reflections on the music of the past, and authors refer back to earlier writings. Detailed accounts of specific contributions and qualities of musicians, especially composers, seem to have taken shape in the 18th century with figures like Burney, Hawkins and Rousseau. In the 19th century this variety of musicology was formalised in Germany, becoming part of University curricula. This was, at first, what was called ‘musicology’ in the narrow sense. Mukund Lath takes a much broader view of musicology:

Musicology, the ‘logos’ of music, its prajñā [wisdom] as one might also call it, articulated as thought relating to music, can, I feel, be understood as thought with a meaning and significance much larger than is usually accorded to it. (1998: 267)

A very interesting and rich aspect of such a broad outlook on musicology concerns the idea of musical thought, music as knowledge or a knowledge system, a system through which we understand society and culture and even the whole world around us. Menezes Bastos described such a theorising with the Kamayurá people of the Brazilian Amazon, and coined the term ‘musico-lógica’ in Portuguese to describe the extremely complex way in which the Kamayurá use music to understand their relation to the world (1999). In English we could well translate this as music-logic, or used the Latinised expression that Kunst used as the title of his small book on ethno-musicology, ‘musico-logica’ (1950).

Music as a knowledge system has been an important issue in many cultures and far back in history, but very few attempts have been made to tie up the loose ends. Although many authors have discussed the music of the spheres, from the pythagorean tradition till Kepler (Van der Schoot 2001, Bruhn 2005) and also from the Indian perspective on ‘the world as sound’ (Berendt, Padoux, Beck) there is no unequivocal connection to contemporary musicological thought. And indeed such a connection is difficult to make; in Simone Mahrenholz’ words:

Könnte man dasjenige, was Musik für die »conditio humana« und ihr Verstehen leistet, in Worten analysieren, so bedürfte es strenggenommen keiner Musik. (2008: 1537)

[Iif we could analyse in words what music does for the human condition and its understanding we would strictly speaking not need music, transl. Wim van der Meer]

Conclusion

We have seen that there have been two paths into cultural musicology, the cultural anthropology of music and the cultural analysis of music. The first has been suggested as a better name for ‘ethnomusicology’ (Chase), while the second would be a suitable replacement of the ‘rapidly ageing’ new musicology (Kramer). As Jonathan Stock (1997: 54-5) remarked, the fusion of ethnomusicology and new musicology has not materialised quite as fully as we might think or hope, and the deeply entrenched distinction between musicology as the study of western art music’ and ethnomusicology as the study of the music of the rest continues to dominate the musicological ‘world hearing’. Popular music and jazz studies have found more support in ethnomusicology than in musicology, but are now becoming independent fields. Still, we think that musicologies that are based on genre, variety or region would still have to apply perspectives such as the cultural, the historical, the systematic or any combination thereof.

We think that musicology, as a branch of the humanities, has more affinity with the cultural analysis of music (and with Mieke Bal, we prefer analysis over study (2003)) then it has with the anthropology of music. But equally important is the musical analysis of culture, which reminds of Fidelis Smith’ idea of “research and creative thinking in philosophy and the aesthetics of world culture”.

Over the past century the distinction between west en rest has become increasingly meaningless. Let us make it clear that people grow up in a musical culture and that focussing primarily on that musical cultural when they start reflecting on music is understandable and legitimate. But the very idea of a musical culture cannot be monolithic. A Dutch person may have been growing up with European art music, with Anglo-American jazz, pop and folk music, with Dutch levenslied, perhaps German Schlager and French chansons, and very possibly even some world music. And we do see that our first year students have varying interests, some may want to dig into art music, others into pop, and yet others into klezmer, flamenco or gamelan.
Similarly an Indian student may be familiar with Indian art music, Indian film and popular music, Indian folk music, Anglo-American pop music etc. Delving into music through the music we know is a plausible approach, but on the other hand, by getting to know musics that are not familiar, we can also learn much that we would never understand by only staying within the known. As anthropologists say, if you know one culture you can’t know culture (Fahrenfort cited by Köbben 1971: 24).

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I am not claiming to be the first to make such a statement, this is just a personal note why I am not.

From the safety of a footnote, I'll remark that Einstein said there were only two things he was certain about; the infinity of the universe and of the stupidity of mankind, and he added he wasn’t sure about the first - and I’m not sure about the stupidity of man, but for musicologists I can vouch.

The ultimate blow still has to come, and we can’t wait