Ethnomusicology is a field whose fundamental nature results from its association with several disciplines which have nourished it. –Bruno Nettl. "Introduction." In Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology. p. xv, 1991.

When the Society for Ethnomusicology was launched in 1955 “to promote the research, study, and performance of music in all historical periods and cultural contexts,”¹ its founders certainly envisioned research on Africa and its diaspora as one of this organization’s important endeavors. Just two years prior, a trio of scholars—Willard Rhodes, David McAllester, and Alan Merriam—had gathered at the meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Philadelphia to brainstorm about a newsletter that would keep like minded scholars abreast of happenings in the new field of “ethnomusicology.” Describing Merriam as “a spirited young man who had just returned from his first field trip in Africa,” Rhodes reflects on the influential role this trio would have on the development of ethnomusicology into a full-fledged discipline. Of the three, only Rhodes was a professor of Music; McAllester and Merriam taught in Anthropology departments at Wesleyan University and Northwestern University, respectively.² This interdisciplinary foundation undoubtedly shaped the approach subsequent researchers would take to studying and representing music of the African diaspora.³

Although there are multiple disciplinary approaches to the study of African and African diasporic music, those who research music in or as culture most typically situate themselves within the disciplines of either musicology or ethnomusicology, which are the

³ A complete survey of the vast body of ethnomusicological work on Africa is, of course, beyond the scope of this essay. In addition to the work whose authors I mention in this essay, I should make mention of Richard Waterman's African Influence on the Music of the Americas (1952), A.M. Jones's Studies in African Music (1959), and John Miller Chernoff's classic African Rhythm and African Sensibility (1979), which have influenced generations of ethnomusicologists. Other important monographs on African music have been written by Hugo Zemp (1971), Paul Berliner (1978), Stone (1982), Euba (1990), Christopher Waterman (1990), Veit Erlmann (1991), John Collins (1992), Steven Friedson (1996), Michelle Kisliuk (1998), Eric Churry (2000), Michael Veal (2000), Kofi Agawu (1995; 2003), Louise Meintjes (2003), Tejumola Olaniyan (2004), and a host of scholars. See Jean Kidula's article (2006) for a thorough review of research on African music by African-born music scholars. Kidula's work provides fascinating insight into how the African academy has dealt with a legacy of music scholarship that has been transmitted largely by European and North American scholars. She calls for a distinctly African musicology that gives voice to African musicians and scholars who have too often been ignored or underappreciated by scholars educated in the West.
major academic homes for music scholars. Nevertheless, those who study music hardly fit into neat disciplinary categories, especially since music scholars often situate themselves outside of the musicology-ethnomusicology framework and choose to borrow heavily from, or even work within, Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, or any number of similar fields in which musical sound is also understood to be one of many expressive variables in a multifaceted sociocultural landscape. Even those working under the same disciplinary label often debate a variety of deceptively simple questions: What is the proper definition of "music"? What methods and approaches are best suited to the study of music in Africa and its diaspora? And to what extent, if at all, can musical texts be analyzed apart from the contexts of their performance? Since John Blacking’s (1973) famously influential assertion that music is “humanly organized sound,” there have been countless attempts to rethink this definition and the ways in which music should best be described, analyzed, and represented in scholarly texts. Christopher Small’s (1998) use of the gerund “musicking,” a term that breaks apart rigid conceptions of music as a “thing” to be heard or analyzed on a score, is particularly helpful to music scholars who study African and African diasporic communities in which music and dance are inextricably linked to a broad constellation of social practices and values.

In this essay, I will survey some of the major issues and themes in the ethnomusicological study of Africa and its diaspora. My goal is to convey a sense of how various ethnomusicologists have conceptualized the African diaspora, explain some of the major theories and paradigms that have shaped their work, and zero in on the work of influential African Americanist and Caribbeanist music scholars.

**Disciplining the Diaspora**

I believe that the musicology-ethnomusicology dichotomy continues to inform the theories and methodologies of most music scholars, particularly given that most receive training in universities where graduate study in Music is divided into these two discrete subdisciplines. Those who refer to themselves as "musicologists" traditionally focus on some aspect of Western European art music. Ethnomusicologists typically pick topics from a wider palette of geographical regions, and the musics of Africa and its diaspora, along with other forms of "world music," typically fall under their purview. This practical division of "the West" from "the rest" is understood to be problematic by most ethnomusicologists. Bruno Nettl, one of ethnomusicology's iconic figures, has provided three definitions of ethnomusicology: "the comparative study of musical systems and cultures; the study of music in or as culture; the study of a musical culture from an outsider's perspective. None of these excludes the art music culture of Western society, but few ethnomusicological studies have actually been devoted to it" (1989, 1). Nettl has also stated that despite his own relatively flexible definition of the field, few "ethnomusicological" studies have actually focused on music from the Western classical tradition (Nettl 1989, 1). Rather, ethnomusicologists have tended to conduct fieldwork in the more "exotic" locales outside of Western Europe, where "world music" styles are found. The term "world music" has been a common source of criticism for decades, and its nagging presence in the academy is perhaps due to the ease with which it connotes
otherness within the Western academy, particularly for undergraduates seeking courses on "different" genres of music.4

Major research universities often structure ethnomusicological studies in remarkably different ways. For example, UCLA boasts a Department of Ethnomusicology, unlike institutions in which there is, more typically, a relatively small graduate program in ethnomusicology offered under the auspices of a larger Department or School of Music. A growing number of North American universities now seem to be offering less traditional approaches to the study of musical practice. At the University of Virginia, where I currently teach, our Music Department's program in Critical and Comparative Studies in Music encourages graduate students "to develop interdisciplinary perspectives on music and musical culture." Unlike Schools or Departments of Music in which students choose a course of study corresponding to either an ethnomusicology or musicology track, UVA's Music Department seeks "to transcend boundaries between 'musicology' and 'ethnomusicology,' looking toward a transdisciplinary study of musical life." The University of Pennsylvania offers its ethnomusicology curricula through an "Anthropology of Music" program, which "reflects the interdisciplinary nature of ethnomusicology, combining approaches from anthropology, musicology, folklore, literary theory, religious studies, linguistics, critical theory, and gender studies in order to interrogate the cultural webs of meaning within which music resonates."5 A number of major research journals provide space for music-centered research on Africa and its diaspora. The journal now known as the Yearbook for Traditional Music appeared in 1949, when it was originally titled Journal of the International Folk Music Council.6 Ethnomusicology is considered the flagship publication of the discipline for which it is named; and other important publications emerged in recent decades. For example, Popular Music and Society was established in 1971,7 followed by the Black Music Research Journal, which first appeared in 1980.8 While approaches to the study of the world's music cultures may vary according to the type of publication in which research is presented and in terms of the structure of programs and departments of music, there is a broad institutional consensus that ethnomusicological training must involve study across academic disciplines.

Ethnomusicology is an interdisciplinary field of study that Jeff Todd Titon has famously defined as the study of "people making music" or perhaps "people experiencing music" (1997, 91). Nettl (1991, quoted above) goes so far as to contend that this interdisciplinarity is part of ethnomusicology’s “fundamental nature.” Although ethnomusicology did not clearly emerge as a distinct branch of musical scholarship until after World War II (Neuman 1993, 270), the first half of the twentieth century saw some significant developments in the study of African and African-derived music. Scholars born in the latter part of the nineteenth century—those who comprise the “first and

4 Feld (1994) problematizes the terms "world music" and "world beat," which he links to the commodification, marketing, and packaging of music of ethnic minorities situated within and outside of the Western(ized) world.
5 Quotes regarding the Departments of Music at the Universities of Virginia and Pennsylvania are taken from the section, "Guide to Programs in Ethnomusicology," on the Society for Ethnomusicology's website. See http://webdb.iu.edu/sem/scripts/guidetoprograms/guidelist.cfm [Accessed 6/24/06]
6 http://www.ictmusic.org/ICTM/about.php
7 http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/03007766.html
8 http://www.cbmr.org/pubs/bmrj.htm
second generations of ethnomusicologists” (Blum 1991, 3) deserve much credit for putting in place theoretical and methodological paradigms that would inform subsequent research. By the 1920s, these early ethnomusicologists found that “the musics of Africa and their transformations in the New World proved to be difficult subjects of inquiry,” particularly as they (mis)applied European musical terminology to African genres (3). It took until at least the 1960s for ethnomusicologists to fully appreciate an African capacity to produce “simultaneous occurrences of otherwise unrelated sounds made purposely to heighten dramatic tension, to animate a performance, to add to the texture of a piece of music or to provide signals” (Nketia 1967:88, cited in Blum 1991, 25).

Ghanaian music scholar and composer J.H. Kwabena Nketia reflects on his formative experiences with ethnomusicology in the 1950s, stating that as a young student of ethnomusicology, he was disheartened by the narrow and somewhat ethnocentric definitions that were given to it in the 1950’s, such as the study of “extra-European music” or “music outside of western civilization” and “the study of music other than one's own,” which denies non-western scholars like myself the right to study their own music in ethnomusicological terms. (2005, 4)

Nketia eventually discovered some redeeming qualities in ethnomusicology, and he is particularly pleased that while "other branches of musical scholarship…are narrowly focused on one tradition of music, ethnomusicology accepts the diverse musical cultures of the world as its subject matter" (8). Above all, he states, it was ethnomusicology's "humanistic goals and interdisciplinary orientation that bonded [him] to it." (9) Having already completed six years studying of African music as a research fellow in the University of Ghana's Sociology Department, Nketia found himself compelled to implement a multifaceted approach to musical scholarship; and ethnomusicology was well-suited to this goal. He came to see ethnomusicology as "a way of thinking about music that enables the perceptive scholar or creative individual to respond in a particular way to the challenges of his/her field context or to data presented by others" (2). Nketia's Ghanaian heritage, along with his many experiences studying and teaching ethnomusicology around the world, may very well have afforded him a certain sensitivity toward the interconnectedness of one's fieldwork site and the effective means of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing field "data."9 In Ghana, he met Melville Herskovits, who mentored Nketia as he engaged in his first bit of African diasporic ethnographic research. Through his contact with African Americans, particularly his Sunday visits to Chicago's storefront churches, Nketia gained a thorough understanding of "the ethnomusicological task of the African scholar" and valuable experience that would prepare him for subsequent field trips to South America and the Caribbean (15).

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9 While teaching ethnomusicology at the China Conservatory of Music in the late 1980s, Nketia was somewhat surprised by the "intuitive link [his] prospective 'students' established in their own minds between area studies in music and the general field of ethnomusicology." He adds, "What they were particularly interested in…was not information about African music per se but the ethnomusicology behind the Music of Africa" (2). Chinese ethnomusicologists saw their chief objective as to gain expertise in their own musical traditions. The tendency of Western ethnomusicologists to privilege the study of "other" music cultures is by no means universal. See also Witzleben 1997.
It seems certain Nketia's cultural background played a role in his approach to the study of the African diaspora; and he stands as one of numerous "native" ethnomusicologists whose perspectives on African and African diasporic music often differ from those of their North American and European counterparts. As Blum (1993) points out,

Some of the most telling criticism of academic dichotomies between “text” and “context,” between the “musical” and the “social,” has come from African musicologists (e.g., Ekwueme 1975; Nketia 1981; Agawu 1991), who have correctly identified the bad faith with which too many Western ethnomusicologists have emphasized “social function” over “artistic value.” It is superfluous as well as condescending for scholars to find “redeeming sociological significance” in musical practices they treat as undeveloped or as products of “restricted” rather than “elaborated” codes. (8)

Perhaps one of ethnomusicology’s distinguishing features is, as Neuman suggests, the “constant challenging of canons” resulting in a “heterogeneity of tales” (Neuman 1993, 272; cf. Bohlman 1992). This heterogeneity is no doubt related to the different subject positions of ethnomusicologists who have increasingly hailed from countries outside of North America and Europe and who bring a variety of cultural perspectives to bear on the field.

The African Link: Reflections, Retentions, and Representations

Music, more than any other cultural discourse, has been taken as the ultimate embodiment of African and African diasporic cultural values and as prima facie evidence of deep cultural connections among all peoples of African descent. –Ingrid Monson, “Introduction” In *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*. p. 2.

Given the profound link between musical expression and cultural values in societies around the world, it is no surprise that music scholars have made invaluable contributions to the study of African and African diasporic communities. However, in the sociopolitical climate of the pre-World War II era, in which Africans and their descendents were most often deemed incapable of developing complex musical systems, the work of ethnomusicologists such as Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and George Herzog was not immune from the racist stereotypes and fantasies concerning black music making. Born in Austria, Hornbostel often drew distinctions between European and African ways of music making. In a discussion of African rhythmic conceptions, he famously asserted, “We [Europeans] proceed from hearing, they [Africans] from motion” (1928, 53). As Blum explains, Hornbostel believed that the “primordial unity between impulses to motion and the sounds that result had in large measure vanished from the experience of Europeans, as aural and tactile perception had become separate domains” (1991, 20). The Hungarian-born ethnomusicologist George Herzog was strongly influenced by Hornbostel's work. Herzog stressed the need to view music in relation to specific sociocultural contexts, but he believed that blacks in the United States owed little, if any,
of their musical traits to an African cultural heritage (Herzog 1936, 52; McAllester 1985, 86).

Melville Herksovits's work, particularly his *Myth of the Negro Past*, has influenced generations of scholars, some of whom have refined his arguments. A good example of such refinement lies in *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*, by Sidney Mintz and Richard Price. These authors suggest that Herskovits's linking of African and Afro-American cultural traits is too direct. The African inheritance, they argue, is more accurately identified at the level of underlying structures and orientations that shape outward manifestations of musical and spiritual practice. Mintz and Price (1976, 62-65) summarize the well-known "debate" between E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits over the issue of African retentions in the Americas. Frazier (1939) saw blacks in the United States as culturally bankrupt as a result of their enslavement in the New World. A history of brutal oppression had, in his view, stripped African Americans of any realistic connection to an African past. Herskovits (1941) strongly disagreed with this view, positing instead that blacks in the Americas possessed a distinct cultural heritage and that their social institutions (e.g., marriage practices, family structures) could be linked to an identifiable African past. Responding to this debate in the 1970s, Mintz and Price settled on a more nuanced assessment:

An African cultural heritage, widely shared by the people imported into any new colony, will have to be defined in less concrete terms, by focusing more on values, and less on sociocultural terms, and even by attempting to identify unconscious "grammatical principles, which may underlie and shape behavioral response. (9-10) … In considering African-American cultural continuities, it may well be that the more formal elements stressed Herksovits exerted less influence on the nascent institutions of newly enslaved and transported Africans than did their common basic assumptions about social relations or the workings of the universe. (11)

While anthropologists have debated the issue of African retentions, the musical link between Africa and its diaspora has been one of the most prevalent themes throughout the history of ethnomusicological thought. Ethnomusicologists have now come to espouse the view that "we can hardly deny that Africa Has had much to with the ways that New World Blacks have chosen to address the realities before them from the moment they emerged from the ships" (Okpewho 1999, xv). In *The Power of Black Music* (1995), Samuel Floyd contends that

African survivals exist not merely in the sense that African-American music has the same characteristics as its African counterparts, but also that the musical *tendencies*, the mythological beliefs and assumptions, and the interpretive strategies of African Americans are the same as those that underlie the music of the African homeland, that these tendencies and beliefs continue to exist as African cultural memory, and that they continue to inform the continuity and elaboration of African-American music. (5)
A similar assessment is made by Christopher Small (1987), who asserts that for over 500 years, black musical and bodily expressions have served as "tools by means of which [black] people...have struggled, and continue to struggle, to assert their own definition of themselves." He adds that while African diasporic music is by no means monolithic, it is clearly distinguished by "an openness and an adaptability which...is a part of the African cultural inheritance" (10).

Much of the ethnomusicological work of this sort draws from a long tradition of anthropological scholarship on African retentions, most notably the work of Melville Herskovits (1941). John Storm Roberts (1972 [1998]) and Olly Wilson have ambitiously explored the common ground between various African diasporic music cultures, which are linked via a tie to Africa. Roberts's provocative book, *Black Music of Two Worlds: African, Caribbean, Latin, and African-American Traditions*, was first published in the early 1970s. His statements on the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on New World black culture are quite obviously typical of anthropological and ethnomusicological discourses of the decade.

In all the black regions of the New World, African-Americans made two contributions to the cultural pattern: the neo-African music they developed and maintained for their own private consumption; and the transformations they wrought in predominantly white music when they performed it. Black performance led to the creation of new black musical styles out of mixed elements, imparted African influences to white styles, and at the same time played a major part in the development of Afro-European national styles. The existence of both plantation slaves remote from white cultural influence, and house and urban slaves who not merely shared but heavily influenced a mainly white life, was mirrored in a wide variation in the extent of black musical experience and effect from one place to another. (43)

Still other scholars, such as Joseph Murphy, have approached this issue from the perspective of Religious Studies. Murphy's book (1994) looks at various diasporic spiritual communities, including Jamaican Revival Zion, Haitian Vodou, and African American Christian churches, to suggest that all of these expressive cultures cohere around an African-based conception of "working the spirit." While not focused directly on musical practice, per se, Murphy's work fuels ethnomusicological speculation into the dynamic role of musical activities in evoking the supernatural.

Gerard Behague's edited volume, *Music and Black Ethnicity* (1992) addresses the issue of black ethnicity in Caribbean and South American locales in which "black" ethnic groups are quite frequently in the minority. In Behague's introduction, he points out that since there is such tremendous diversity—both of people and the terminology they use to racially self-identify—the notion of black ethnicity, along with a supposed link to Africa can be problematic. Behague therefore urges scholars "to reflect in a more sophisticated manner on the relationship of music expressions and black ethnicity in the Caribbean and South America" (vi). The influence of Melville Herskovits and the historical processes specific to various locales have often led to speculation as to which, if any, Africanisms have been retained. Nevertheless, Behague contends that "the search for Africanisms and the very concepts of syncretism and acculturation are to a great extent symptomatic of
colonialist thought," primarily because they "privilege the notions of socio-cultural assimilation...to the dominant segments of society" (vii). Certainly, an exclusive focus on "blackness" in the Caribbean and South America may underestimate the importance of musical expressions of indigenized or creolized cultural. After all, Behague asserts, "Some aspects of cultural expression in contemporary Afro-American communities in the Caribbean and South America may not be of historic African derivation at all, but fulfill an equally vital purpose and sense of heritage" (vii). In *Caribbean Currents* (2006), Peter Manuel argues that "the scholarly pendulum may have swung a bit too far in the direction of emphasizing the ability of slaves to retain and construct their own cultures" (6). Not surprisingly, then, Manuel emphasizes intra-Caribbean diversity, even devoting a chapter to the Caribbean's East Indian musical heritage, which is especially noticeable in Guyana and Trinidad.10

One of the most frequently cited criticisms of African retention theory has come from English scholar Paul Gilroy. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy scolds North American scholars for failing to acknowledge African America’s debt to the much broader African diaspora and especially to the African Caribbean. Heidi Feldman's *Black Rhythms of Peru* (2006) is particularly refreshing in that it highlights a “Black Pacific” musical tradition and reminds us that even as Gilroy’s work has been embraced, scores of African diasporic musics remain marginalized by academic writers.

The criticisms launched against ethnomusicologists who supposedly err on the side of emphasizing African retentions have never wholly discouraged scholars from positing a vibrant cultural link between African and African American musical traditions. In an article that first appeared in 1979 and was reprinted in a 1985 edited volume, Maultsby argued that "the Black musical tradition will continue to evolve and mirror new values, attitudes, philosophies and lifestyles, but it will never lose its West African essence" (1985, 51). She steers clear of Herskovits's notion of direct retentions, aligning herself more closely with the more moderate school of thought espoused by Mintz and Price (1976). "It is really West African concepts," Maultsby asserts,

> more so than elements, that have been retained in U.S. Black music. Many African elements, as well as genres, have disappeared due to external pressures, social upheavals, and environmental changes; in their place, are fundamental substitutes. These new genres, however, adhere to many basic West African musical principles. (43)

More recently, Gerard Kubik's *Africa and the Blues* (1999) posits that many of the fiddling traditions espoused by early New World blacks have direct antecedents in West and Central Africa.

Ethnomusicologists have not generally been successful at analyzing intradiasporic musical practices that occur within the United States. Indeed, most research has focused on the distinctly black American (read U.S.) characteristics of particular genres such as

10 Revised and expanded in 2006, Peter Manuel's *Caribbean Currents* first appeared in 1995 and won the Caribbean Studies Association's Best Book Prize. Supplemented by material from Ken Bilby and Michael Largey, who contributed significant material on Jamaica and Haiti, respectively, the book is intended as a critical survey of musical genres native to particular New World locales, and it has appealed to students and professors of Caribbean popular music for use in undergraduate courses.
blues, jazz, gospel, or hip-hop. But with the continuing migrations of Africans from a variety of countries to the United States, and with the intermingling of black ethnicities in urban musical settings (Butler 2000; 2005), there are dynamic communities of cultural interaction ripe for ethnomusicological analysis. Best known for her work on African American hip-hop and girls’ musical games (2005), Kyra Gaunt has begun to explore intradiasporic interactions at St. Nick’s Pub in Harlem. Gaunt notes that scholars of black music have generally failed to acknowledge the ways in which traditionally African American musical spaces are often inflected with “black” expressions that emanate from outside U.S. borders. She explains,

Recent migrations of Africans to the U.S. since the 1970s [have been] simply left out of the African American musical landscape. By limiting the focus of African American music to the activity of citizens, who for the most part are the descendents of the earliest forced migrations from Africa, the inclusion of recent African migrations could only be read as peripheral and insignificant. (3)

Through her fieldwork at St. Nick’s Pub, Gaunt was able to interact—and to watch herself interacting—closely with a diversity of “black” voices and bodies. In so doing, she gains precious insight into the “conflicting performances of diaspora” (3) that typically go underacknowledged in the academy.

Scholars in disciplines outside of Music have greatly influenced music-centered discourses on the nature of American American music. Samuel Floyd was among the first ethnomusicologists to expound on Henry Louis Gates's (1988) well-known analysis of "Signifyin(g)" practices. Examining the West African trickster figure, Esu-Elegbara and his "Afro-American relative, the Signifying Monkey" (44), Gates makes a compelling case that "[t]he black [literary] tradition has inscribed within it the very principles by which it can be read" (xxiii-xxiv). Applied to music, Signifyin(g) describes the multiple types of indirect referencing that musicians and listeners experience in a variety of contexts. Floyd states,

Throughout the history of black music in the United States, it has been through the repetition and revision of texts, through the interplay of black language and black music in a long chain of Signifyin(g) tropes, that African-American peasants became and continue to be poets in a land that initially denied them the right to be called artists of any stripe. (1995, 225).

In Saying Something (1996), Ingrid Monson also draws on Gates's work to illustrate the "intermusicality" of jazz performance. Through analysis of solo improvisations by artists such as John Coltrane and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Monson reveals an African American propensity to allude to previous renditions and performances and refashion musical material in a way that promotes individuality and creative expression. Monson's influential edited volume, The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective (2000), probably represents the most theoretically rigorous attempt to explore the African diaspora from an ethnomusicological point of view. Various topics and locales are held together not only by the volume’s title, but also by the authors’ attempts to situate their work within an African diasporic contextual framework of
analysis. Organized in three parts, the volume contains chapters on Caribbean and African American musics, but also looks carefully at "the redefinition of tradition and modernity through music in contemporary Africa, with particular emphasis on gender, urban popular theatre, and the selling of 'traditional experience' on the international market" (2). The material on Africa is well exemplified by Lucy Duran's chapter, which focuses on the valorization of the "hunter" in Malian popular music. Duran discusses the ways in which traditional hunters' songs serve to evoke a non-ethnic based identity in contradistinction to the dominant Mande musical and political voices. She also illustrates that the hunter theme has been evident in Malian popular music since at least the 1970s, when dance bands and solo artists incorporated hunters' songs in their performances. One of Mali's most famous musicians, Salif Keita, frequently donned hunter apparel and featured the "hunter's harp" in his recordings and album covers of the 1980s. Furthermore, Duran emphasizes that women singers have been major contributors to the "mystique" that continues to surround hunters in Mali. When appropriated by women singers, the hunter's mystique provides "a springboard from which [women] can claim their place within Mali's great historical past and renegotiate their own social status" (178).

Travis Jackson's chapter on jazz ritual makes important reference to the use of ritual forms whose specific manifestations clearly derive from an African spiritual orientation. Travis Jackson (2000) also summarizes how blues music has been described by writers such as Amiri Baraka, Ralph Ellison, and Albert Murray as a vital element in African American culture and performance. Drawing strongly on Herskovits, Baraka saw blues as "the parent of all legitimate jazz" (Baraka 1963, 17, cited in Jackson 2000, 26). According to this line of thought, blues and jazz must remain closely intertwined in order for jazz to retain its authenticity as an African American expression. Whites, Baraka argued, have tended to dilute authentic jazz by performing and recording material that lacks an identifiable blues component. Jackson contrasts the theoretical premise of Baraka's Blues People (1963) with the views of author Ralph Ellison, who critiqued Baraka's "facile linking of social status and racial purity with forms of musical expression" (Jackson 27). Ellison felt that "]the tremendous burden of sociology which [Baraka] would place upon this body of music is enough to give even the blues the blues" (Ellison 1964, 249, cited in Jackson 27). To a much greater extent than Baraka, Ellison highlighted the blues' ritual dimensions, positing that this form of music allows individuals and groups to self identify within American society through musical sound, lyrics, and a spiritual component that is often overlooked by the dominant segments of society.

Albert Murray refined Ellison's ideas in his well-known book Stomping the Blues (1976). Murray argued that blues music functions to "drive the blues away and hold them at bay at least for the time being" and to evoke "an ambiance of Dionysian revelry in the process" (Murray 1976, 17, cited in Jackson 30). Jackson also comments on the significance of work by scholars Lawrence Levine (1977), Christopher Small (1987; 1988), Keil (1991), and Samuel Floyd (1995), all of whom have influenced younger ethnomusicologists who specialize in African American music. Jackson's work suggests

11 Duran's work, like that of other West Africanist ethnomusicologists who began publishing in the 1990s, benefits from the work of music scholars such as J.H. Nketia (1963), Roderic Knight (1973) and Jacqueline DjeDje (1985).
that the jazz's vitality as a ritual form is felt through its inextricably link to the blues and other forms of African diasporic expressive culture. As he explains,

Just like the other musics of the diaspora, and in many similar ways, [jazz] privileges interaction, participation, and formal flexibility in the service of transcendence and communication of normative values and cultural identity. Musical performance does not merely serve to reproduce or express the hierarchies or frames that surround it. It is also concerned with transcending them through metaphoric encodings of deeply held values and strategies for survival. (71)

This emphasis on African American music as a ritual form is not without precedent. For example, an essay by Morton Marks (1974) posits a link between African American musical genres and West African ritual drumming. In contrast to Jackson's work, Marks's primary interest is on Protestant and Pentecostal Christianity and the role of music in facilitating "trance" experiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

Burnim (1980), Jackson-Brown (1990), and Ramsey (2003) offer useful overviews of black religious music scholarship that have emerged since 1960, when George Ricks completed his highly influential doctoral dissertation. Ramsey's Race Music: Black Music from Bebop to Hip-Hop is largely a personal memoir of his upbringing in Chicago and exposure to a wide variety of black musical styles. However, the author interweaves literature reviews of some major works of black music scholarship produced by African Americans. Indiana University professors Mellonee Burnim and Portia Maultsby edited a much anticipated volume (2006) that takes a deeply comprehensive look at African American music. Burnim and Maultsby's volume, which features chapters by an all-star cast of music scholars, is designed to build on Eileen Southern's 1971 classic work, while "advancing the discussion of African American music to include topics that have risen to the forefront in contemporary discourse" (1). Burnim and Maultsby have done other highly significant work: Through thick descriptive ethnography of African American congregational singing, Burnim (1980) has identified musical and cultural elements of gospel music that comprise a "black aesthetic." Maultsby (1992) has looked both broadly at African American musical genres and specifically at gospel music's impact in "secular" arenas. Both have followed in the footsteps of Horace Boyer (1973; 1995), a well-respected pioneer in black gospel music research and the compositional and vocal traditions of African American church worship.12


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12 Harris (1992) and Darden (2004) have also contributed historical studies of black gospel music.
historical in scope; while Monson's *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (1996) draws on the author's ethnographic research to provide insights into the phenomenology of jazz performance. With the increased global spread and popularity of hip-hop\[^{14}\] came a keen scholarly interest in the subject. Monographs by Tricia Rose (1994), Joe Schloss (2004), Felicia Miyakawa (2005), and Kyra Gaunt (2006) are but a few of the works that have become emblematic of an ongoing ethnomusicological fascination. The contributors to Anthony Pinn’s volume (2003) comment of the spiritual dimensions of rap, in a way that draws on the themusicological speculations of Jon Michael Spencer (1991). Spencer is persuasive in his suggestion that African American culture in the United States is infused with a spiritual component that renders traditional sacred-secular dichotomies ineffective as frameworks for understanding the popular vitality of black musical expressions. Likewise, Teresa Reed's discussion (2002) of blues artists demonstrates that "their lyrics suggest the centrality of their belief in God and a deeply religious understanding of themselves and the world around them" (60).

Ethnomusicology of the Caribbean: Performance, Power, and Identity

In recent years some of the most profound contributions to the study of music in the African diaspora have centered on Caribbean locales. Caribbean-born scholars have done significant work on local musical traditions. Olive Lewin's rich (2000) analysis of Jamaican folk music and Gerdes Fleurant's detailed exploration (1987) of music in Haitian Vodou ritual are two noteworthy examples. However, non-native researchers have penned most of the in-depth studies of Caribbean music cultures.\[^{15}\] Jocelyne Guilbault's important work (1993) discusses the popular dance genre known as *zouk* in the Francophone Caribbean. Guilbault explores *zouk* as a transnational expression of Antillean identity; and her work is emblematic of Caribbeanist ethnomusicology of the 1990s, much of which accentuates the role of music as a transnationally mediated form of popular culture that provides subaltern groups a vehicle for identity assertion in the face of local and global hegemonies. Gage Averill (1997) provides a window into the tumultuous history of power negotiations within Haitian popular music. Contending that "the urban elite never achieved anything like hegemony in rural Haiti" (7), he offers both a historical survey of Haiti'smusicopolitical scene and a contemporary (1980s and 1990s) fieldwork-based ethnography of Haitian popular music genres. Averill was among the first ethnomusicologists to explore the role of music as a transnational tool of resistance to state and global hegemony. At events such as the annual Carnival, music becomes one of the "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985), as the masses are able to launch indirect critiques of the rich and powerful. Averill's work has influenced ethnomusicologists such as Norman Stolzoff and Robin Moore, who explore similar issues in Jamaica and Cuba, respectively.

Although members of the Jamaica's wealthy elite typically view the island's dancehall music with disdain, ethnomusicologist Norman Stolzoff provides a refreshingly nuanced perspective towards this musical genre in connection with the sociomoral values of Jamaica's poorer class of people. In Stolzoff's book, *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (2000), dancehall is described as a highly

\[^{15}\] I suspect that the issues Kidula (2006) mentions with regard to African music scholarship may also apply, albeit in different ways, to Caribbeanist ethnomusicology.
complex "field of cultural production" in which negotiations of power and status take place. The author gives insight into the historical processes that gave rise to this musical practice, and he also follows Averill's lead by merging historical data with a rich ethnographic portrayal of contemporary dancehall life. Most significantly, the author contends that the current sociopolitical struggles that unfold in Jamaica, along with their historical antecedents, can be understood through the country's popular music genres. "Dancehall" is presented not simply as a modern form of mass-mediated club music, but rather, as a dynamic expressive genre that has existed in various forms since the slavery era. In different musical manifestations, Stolzoff argues, dancehall musics and spaces have "been an important medium for the black masses to create an alternative social universe of performance, production, and politics" (227). Like Averill, Stolzoff draws on what some cultural theorists refer to as "neo-Gramscian hegemony theory" (e.g., Storey 1993, 13), insisting that the music of subaltern groups represents a highly significant expression of popular agency and empowerment in the face of oppression. As Stolzoff elaborates,

Dancehall is not just a response to hegemonic power; it also produces and mediates relations of power. ...[I]t is a space were the symbolic distinctions that uphold relations of power in a social hierarchy are made, undone, and reinforced. Because dancehall is a primary idiom through which the black lower class has constructed counterideologies, counteridentities, and counterpractices, it has had a transformative, counterhegemonic potential. ... Consequently, social hegemony in Jamaica is not simply guaranteed by a fixed hierarchy; instead, it is contested and maintained in large measure through the practice and discourse of dancehall culture. (227-28)

In Nationalizing Blackness, Robin Moore takes a historical approach to Afro-Cuban popular music focusing on the 1920s and 1930s. Moore sets out to show that contemporary imaginings of Cuba have been strongly shaped by national sentiments that were brewing in the decades before Fidel Castro's rise to power. Moore sees his research into Cuba's past as a useful means of exploring racial tensions and biases that continue to plague the Caribbean island. The 1920s and 1930s represent a relatively progressive era in Cuba's history, as the country's artists and intellectuals engaged in a broader reexamination of inherited colonial prejudice and a tentative acceptance of black working-class culture. Increasingly antagonistic foreign relations with the United States, frustrated nationalist aspirations, economic crisis, political instability and revolution, artistic influences from abroad, and technological innovations all combined to shape the formation of afrocubanismo. Ultimately, a qualified acceptance of black expression was the only recourse of

16 An important prior work on Jamaican dancehall is Carolyn Cooper's provocative Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture (1993). Stolzoff shares Cooper's view that dancehall has been underappreciated as a valid cultural expression of the masses, and he views her as "representative of an intellectual class which opposes the uptown snobbery that categorically condemns dancehall" (245). However, he is generally less enthusiastic than Cooper towards the view that dancehall participants, especially women, have the potential to resist misogynistic oppression and cultivate subaltern agency within dancehall spaces.
intellectuals and performers desirous of creating ideological unity in a country so heavily influenced by Africa. (220)

Expressions of African heritage in Cuba ultimately became limited to socially "respectable" performances that often featured whites in blackface or involved gross caricatures of blacks. These displays bore little resemblance to working class Cuban culture yet helped to solidified negative stereotypes of Afrocuban life. Moore concludes that "the entire history of Cuban popular music since the early nineteenth century can be viewed as a debate over the relative prominence of Afrocuban forms in a country dominated by Eurohispanic culture" (221).

Conclusion

Clearly, there is much more to say about ethnomusicological approaches to Africa and its diaspora. This essay has really only scratched the surface of inquiry into the contributions of music scholars to an enhanced understanding of black expressive cultures around the globe. In ethnomusicological fieldwork and writing, there remain many unresolved issues. Perhaps some of the longest-standing debates among those who endeavor to study the world’s musical traditions revolve around the issues of epistemology, fieldwork, and representation. What is required for a scholar to “know” a piece of music? To what extent can ethnomusicologists gain an “insider’s” understanding of a musical tradition? In what ways does a scholar’s national, racial, and/or gender identity impact how African diasporic musical forms are represented visually and ethnographically?

Another persistent concern in African diasporic ethnomusicological research is the relation between local and global music cultures. Ethnomusicologists have long realized the intellectual senselessness of trying to explore single, geographically bounded locales as though they were sterile Petri dishes of uncontaminated “data”; and new technologies link people and places like never before. Although books and articles on the African diaspora still tend to focus on individual locales, recent decades have witnessed louder calls for scholars to acknowledge the transnational migrations of peoples and their expressive cultures. In fact, an central theme in ethnomusicological studies at least since the 1990s has been the intradiasporic connections between various musical communities and styles. Washburne (1997) examines the Caribbean contributions to the development of African American jazz. In other cases, scholars have moved from one diasporic locale to another. For example, Paul Berliner (1978; 1994) and Jacqueline DjeDje (1978; 1985) have done separate research projects on African American and African musical genres. I imagine that throughout the twenty-first century, ethnomusicologists will continue to struggle with the transmigration of music and what George Lipsitz refers to as its “peculiar relationship to the poetics and the politics of place” (1994, 3). With the explosive popularity of digital technologies and media, Lipsitz’s comments from the mid-1990s ring all the more true over a decade later. He states,

Music that originally emerged from concrete historical experiences in places with clearly identifiable geographic boundaries now circulates as an interchangeable

17 See, for example, Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1987), Trouillot (1992), and Marcus (1995).
commodity marketed to consumers all over the globe. … Jamaican music secures spectacular sales in Germany and Japan. Rap music from inner-city ghettos in the U.S.A. attracts the allegiance of teenagers from Amsterdam to Auckland. Juke boxes and elaborate “sound systems” in Colombia employ dance music from West Africa as the constitutive element of a dynamic local subculture, while Congolese entertainers draw upon Cuban traditions for the core vocabulary of their popular music. (4)

What does it mean, then, to research music of the African diaspora? How should ethnomusicologists locate the Who, What, and Where of our chosen topics? As “virtual” music communities continue to heighten the sense of disconnect between physical places and digital spaces, scholars of musical practice will have to continually rethink their modes of conducting fieldwork. Such issues have certainly been addressed scholars (e.g., Appadurai 1996; Amit 1999), but they are far from resolved.

Sources Cited


