Ethnomusicologists seldom fit comfortably within disciplinary boxes. Like music making in the African diaspora, the practice of ethnomusicology seems always to push beyond academic boundaries almost as soon as they are constructed. While it is true that departments of Music are the principal academic homes for those who study music as cultural practice, many scholars choose to borrow heavily from, or even work within, Anthropology, Media Studies, Performance Studies, and other areas. Even those operating under the same disciplinary label debate some deceptively complicated 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) 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. The gerund *musiciking* [Small 1998], a term that demolishes conceptions of music as a “thing” to be analyzed on a score, is particularly helpful to ethnomusicologists who study African and African diasporic communities in which music and dance are inextricably linked to a broad constellation of social practices and values. Indeed, the inseparability of music making and everyday life lends ethnomusicology a particular salience in the study of African-derived peoples.

In the pages that follow, I survey some of the major issues and themes in ethnomusicology as they relate specifically to research on Africa and its diaspora. My goal is to convey a sense of how ethnomusicologists have conceptualized the African diaspora, explain some of the major theories and paradigms that have shaped their work, and provide a sampling of work by some influential Africanist, African Americanist, and Caribbeanist music scholars. My conclusion offers some lingering questions and concerns, as I discuss some of the challenges awaiting new ethnomusico-
logical research on the African diaspora. I recognize that one of ethnomusicology’s distinguishing features is, as Neuman suggests, the “constant challenging of canons” resulting in a “heterogeneity of tales” (Neuman 1991, 272). This heterogeneity is no doubt related to the vastness of the African diaspora and the richness of its musical products. As this essay suggests, creative musical differences within the African diaspora may parallel the diverse subject positions of ethnomusicologists. Scholars who increasingly write from home bases outside of North America and Europe bring a variety of cultural perspectives to bear on our field.

ETHNOMUSICOCLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

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,” its founders clearly envisioned research on Africa and its diaspora as one of the organization’s most 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 likeminded 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 the Anthropology departments of Wesleyan University and Northwestern University, respectively. This interdisciplinary foundation, especially an affinity toward anthropological theories and methods, undoubtedly shaped the approach subsequent researchers would take to studying musical practices of the African diaspora.

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.” Nettl adds 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 (e.g., Feld 1994), its nagging presence in the Western academy is perhaps due to the ease with which it connotes otherness, particularly for some undergraduates thirsting for exposure to “different” genres of music. But this practical division of “the West” from the rest is also understood to be deeply troubling. Over the past few decades, music scholars have grown increasingly suspicious of the notion that African derived music is intellectually relevant only as the cultural expression of a monolithic, ethnic Other.

Major research universities often structure ethnomusicological curricula in remarkably different ways. A growing number of North American universities are offering less traditional approaches to the study of musical practice. At the University of Virginia, where I taught from 2005 to 2008, the Music Department’s program in Critical and Comparative Studies encourages graduate students “to develop interdisciplinary perspectives on music and musical culture.” Unlike schools or departments of Music in which graduate students choose a course of study corresponding to either an ethnomusicology or musicology track, the University of Virginia’s Music Department seeks “to transcend boundaries between ‘musico-logy’ and ‘ethnomusicology’, looking toward a transdisciplinary study of musical life.” Several universities maintain disciplinary labels but require students to engage an assortment of theoretical viewpoints from outside of ethnomusicology. Such is the case at my current institution, the University of Chicago, where two of the four full-time ethnomusicology professors specialize in African diasporic musics. Graduate students and faculty embrace theory as a vital thread that connects scholars and inspires conversations within the Music Department and across the University. The University of Pennsylvania offers its ethnomusicology curricula through an Anthropology of Music program that “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.” While ethnomusicology’s boundaries are fluid, many contend that it persists as a distinct area of study with its own set of approaches to understanding the diversity of the world’s musics. UCLA even boasts a Department of Ethnomusicology, unlike most institutions in which a relatively small graduate program in ethnomusicology is offered only under the auspices of a larger Department or School of Music. Nevertheless, I believe that text-based approaches to music scholarship are hegemonic in the vast majority of European and North American universities. Moreover, a musicology-ethnomusicology dichotomy continues to inform the thinking of most Western-educated music scholars, particularly given that most receive training in universities where graduate study in music is divided into these two discrete subdisciplines. In the twenty-first century’s first decade, most “musicologists” are still expected to conduct archival research on some aspect of Western European art music. Ethnomusicologists still pick from a wider palette of geographical regions and embrace fieldwork as the sine qua non
of their subdiscipline. Notwithstanding some significant exceptions [e.g., Agawu 2003], the musics of Africa and its diaspora, along with other forms of “world music,” fall predictably under ethnomusicology’s purview.

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. Ethnomusicology is considered the flagship publication of the discipline for which it is named, and other important publications have emerged in recent decades. For example, Popular Music and Society was established in 1971, followed by the Black Music Research Journal, which first appeared in 1980. 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.

**Reflections, Retentions, and Representations of Africa**

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 our understandings of African and African diasporic communities. Despite the considerable amount of scholarly attention given to these communities, it is also not surprising that scholars of African descent have been noticeably underrepresented in music-centered studies and at annual meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology. But following anthropology’s lead, critical examinations of ethnomusicological work have at least called for greater reflexivity and spawned an ongoing interest in how a writer’s positionality affects his or her ethnographic descriptions and analyses. Michelle Kishi’s provocative work (1998) is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as it highlights “the interpersonal negotiations of power dynamics and epistemological grappling involved in research and writing” (13). Jean Ngoya Kidula (2006), who provides a thorough review of African music research by African-born music writers, sheds much needed light on how the latter have dealt with a legacy of music scholarship that has been transmitted largely by Europeans and North Americans. She even advocates a distinctly African brand of musicology that gives voice to musicians and scholars who have too often been ignored or underappreciated by those educated in the West.

Ghanaian music scholar and composer J. H. Kwabena Nketa is another of the numerous “native” ethnomusicologists whose perspectives on African and African diasporic music often differ from those of their

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North American and European counterparts. It seems certain that his cultural background played a role in his approach to the study of the African diaspora. Reflecting on his formative experiences with ethnomusicology in the 1950s, he writes that as a young student of ethnomusicology, he was disheartened by its “narrow and somewhat ethnocentric definitions” (2005, 4). Seeking to study his own country’s music from an ethnomusicological perspective, he naturally found problematic the notion of ethnomusicology as a discipline composed of scholars in the West studying music makers in the non-West. He lamented that 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” [Nketa 1967, 88]. However, Nketa 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” [Nketa 2005, 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 of studying African music as a research fellow in the University of Ghana’s Sociology Depart- ment, Nketa 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 pre- sented by others” [3]. Nketa’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 interconnect- edness of one’s fieldwork site and the effective means of collecting, interpreting, and analyzing field “data.” In Ghana, he met Melville Herskovits, who mentored Nketa 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, Nketa 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].

The first half of the twentieth century saw some significant developments in the study of African-derived music. Ethnomusicologists born in late nineteenth-century Europe 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 Euro-
pean musical terminology to African genres [Blum 1991a, 3]. Often defined as the study of “people making music” [Titon 1997, 91], ethnomusicology did not clearly emerge as a distinct branch of musical scholarship until after World War II [Neuman 1991, 270]. In the sociopolitical climate of the pre–World War II era, Africans and their descendants were most often deemed incapable of developing complex musical systems. The work of pioneer 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 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” [1991a, 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 Herskovits’s work, particularly his Myth of the Negro Past [1941], 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, 63–65] summarize the well-known “debate” between E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits over the issue of African rejections 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 [1947] 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 of an African cultural inheritance characterized by a set of “common basic assumptions about social relations or the workings of the universe” [11].

While anthropologists have debated the issue of African rejections, the musical link between Africa and its diaspora has been one of the most prevalent themes throughout the history of ethnomusicalological thought. Ethnomusicologists have now come to accept the view that “Africa has had much to do 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]. Samuel Floyd [1995] likewise asserts the relevance of African rejections, which exist insofar as “the musical tendencies, the mythological beliefs and assumptions, and the interpretive strategies of African Americans . . . continue to exist as African cultural memory [and] 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” [to]. He adds that while African diasporic music is by no means monolithic, it is clearly distinguished by an African-derived capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and draw from new sources of creative energy. While not focused directly on musical practice per se, Joseph Murphy’s work [1994] fuels ethnomusicalological speculation into musical evocations of the supernatural among various diasporic spiritual communities that cohere around an African-based conception of “working the spirit.”

Gerard Béhague’s 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. The editor 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. Béhague 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” [vii]. 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, Béhague 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” [viii]. 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, Béhague 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 heri-
tage” [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.6 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 rebuffed, scores of African continental and diaspora musicians remain marginalized.

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, Portia 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 Herskovitz’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.”

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.

FROM AFRICA TO AFRICAN AMERICA

Studies of “black” musical genres have contributed much to ethnomusicological literature on music in the United States. But scholars have been less successful at analyzing, or even recognizing, intradiasporic musical practices occurring within this nation’s boundaries. In the United States, these types of practices, which include Caribbean and African inflections of popular music genres, are particularly prominent in urban areas populated by an array of African-descended peoples from around the globe. Most research on black musical genres in the United States has highlighted the distinctly African American characteristics of particular genres such as blues, jazz, gospel, or hip-hop. The failure to deconstruct reified notions of blackness feels self-perpetuating, as this academic void goes hand in hand with the tendency for Malians, Ghanaians, Kenyans, and Jamaicans, Haitians, St. Lucians, and many others to be lumped into an assumedly monolithic racial category. With the continuing migrations of African diasporic peoples to the United States, and with the intermingling of black ethnicities in urban musical settings, there are dynamic communities of cultural interaction ripe for ethnomusicological analysis. And ethnomusicologists are finally rising to the challenge. Best known for her 2006 work on African American hip-hop and girls’ musical games, Kyra Gaunt [2003] has explored intradiasporic interactions at St. Nick’s Pub in Harlem. She 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. 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 gained precious insight into the “conflicting performances of diaspora” [5] that typically go unacknowledged in the academy.

Scholars in disciplines outside of music have greatly influenced music-centered discourses on the nature of African American music. Samuel Floyd was among the first ethnomusicologists to expound on Henry Louis Gates’s [1988] well-known analysis of “Signifying[g]” practices. Examining the West African trickster figure, Ewu-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, Signifying describes the multiple types of indirect referencing that musicians and listeners experience in a variety of contexts [43]. As Floyd 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 Signifying[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, 235].

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
CARIBBEAN PERFORMANCE, POWER, AND IDENTITY

In recent years some of the most fascinating 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, nonnative researchers have penned most of the in-depth studies of Caribbean music cultures. Jocelyne Guilbault’s important work (1995) discusses the popular dance genre known as zouk in the Francophone Caribbean as a transnational expression of Antillean identity. Her work is emblematic of Caribbeanist ethnomusicology of the 1990s, much of which accentuates the role of music as a transculturally 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’s musico-political scene and a contemporary (1980s and 1990s) fieldwork-based ethnohistory of Haitian popular music genres. Averill was one of 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 a means of creative resistance, as the masses are able to launch indirect critiques of the rich and powerful. Elizabeth McAlister’s groundbreaking ethnohistory (2002) furthers this discussion by underscoring the often neglected political, spiritual, and gendered dimensions of Haitian rara. Averill’s work has also influenced ethnomusicologists such as Timothy Rommen, Norman Stolzoff, and Robin Moore, who explore similar issues in Trinidad, Jamaica, and Cuba, respectively.

Although members of Jamaica’s wealthy elite typically view the island’s dancehall music with disdain, ethnomusicologist Norman Stolzoff provides a refreshingly nuanced perspective toward 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 complex “field of cultural production” in which negotiations of power and status take place.10 The author explains the historical processes that gave rise to this musical practice, and he also follows Averill’s lead by merging historical data with a rich ethnohistorical 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” (127). 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.

In Nationalizing Blackness (1997), 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 bias 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. The author finds that “a qualified acceptance of black expression was the only recourse of intellectuals and performers desirous of creating ideological unity in a country so heavily influenced by Africa” (210). 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 solidified negative stereotypes of Afro-Cuban 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 Afro-Cuban forms in a country dominated by Euro-Hispanic culture” (211).
LINGERING QUESTIONS, ONGOING CONCERNS

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, which I have only touched on. 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 black diasporic peoples and their expressive cultures. In fact, a central theme in ethnomusicological research 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 Djalde (1978, 1985) have each done research projects on both 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 more than 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 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 and writing about music in the African diaspora.

NOTES

1. Commenting on the role of a scholar’s positionality in disciplinary critiques, Stephen Blum (1991b) 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 . . . 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.


4. Quoted 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.ui.edu/sem/scripts/guidetoprogams/guidelist.cfm (accessed 6/16/07).


8. Revised and expanded in 2006, Peter Manuel’s Carribbean Currents first appeared in 1995. 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.


10. An important prior work on Jamaican dancehall is Carolyn J. Cooper's pro-
vocative. *Noises in the Blood.* 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." [45]. However, he is generally less enthusiastic than Cooper toward the view that dancehall participants, especially women, have the potential to resist misogynistic oppression and cultivate subaltern agency within dancehall spaces.

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**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

Ethnomusicology and the African Diaspora


Suggestions for Further Reading

Ethnomusicology and the African Diaspora


