Music and Minorities: The Future through the Past

Adelaida Reyes
New Jersey City University

Speak of the past and two voices quickly make themselves heard. One urges keeping the past in mind. Whoever looks deeper into the past, it says, sees more clearly into the future. The other voice urges forgetting the past; it is gone. The future alone is what matters.

This paper subscribes to the view that the past is a repository of what has been called the wisdom of the ages and of useful precedents. In it are contained cautionary tales of turns wrongly taken, of missed opportunities or practices held beyond their useful life. It is therefore to the past that I turn for the story of music and minorities to see if, through this story, the past might have something to say to the future. In this inquiry, the focus will not be on a chronicle of events or achievements although obviously they will be a necessary complement. Rather, I adopt the viewpoint of Thomas S. Kuhn, historian of science, who believes that such a chronicle can be misleading. He advocates, instead, letting history “emerge from the historical record of the research activity itself” (1996:1).

The Perspective

The story of music and minorities begins with a phantom trajectory—a research activity not undertaken. While speculating on what might have been is futile more often than not, a study of the reasons why a strong possibility did not turn into reality can be particularly instructive. It can yield important clues on the time and place of a particular music’s emergence as subject of study in ethnomusicology. Beyond their potential historical value, those clues can help define the questions that we need to put to history so that this can be put to the service of the future.

Born in Western Europe in the last decade of the nineteenth century, ethnomusicology or vergleichende Musikwissenschaft as it was initially called, concerned itself with the music of so-called folk and primitive peoples. Almost by default, it being non-European, the art music of the non-Western world also became part of ethnomusicology’s domain. At the time, Western Europe saw itself as the cultural and political center of the world. As such, it defined the periphery. Its sphere of influence extended throughout the world, backed by its wealth and military might. In today’s terms, when the majority is a matter not merely of numbers but of power, nineteenth century Western Europe and its citizenry represented the global majority. The rest, the musical cultures of which coincided with the nations and the
cultures that were ethnomusicology’s field, were, relative to Western Europe, the minority.

This perspective raises the expectation that ethnomusicology might have had a predisposition in favor of studies on music and minorities—a latent condition that needed only the right circumstances to become reality.

Those circumstances were already coming into view. Ethnomusicologists were accumulating the kinds of knowledge that would steer them in the direction of minority studies. They were working with and in communities that were designated as tribes, castes, religious groups, and other such groups that suggested a larger society of which they were a part. The body of information on these groups was growing by leaps and bounds, fed by anthropologists, colonial government officials, missionaries, and travelers of various kinds. What was missing was a theoretical framework within which they could be studied as structural parts of a larger unit, i.e., as minorities. For more than half of ethnomusicology’s history, the development of such a framework was effectively countervailed by the assumption that the societies the discipline had chosen to investigate were self-contained and autonomous—discrete wholes whose music was governed by a singular musical system.

As societies evolved, as scholars became increasingly aware of growing social complexity, and after the dramatic shifts in centers of power along with the great migration movements during and after World War II, self-contained cultures free from outside influences increasingly became pure theoretical construct. Cultural boundaries were proving permeable, expressive forms traveled across geographic and cultural boundaries with their makers and users, and as those forms took root and adapted to new environments, the homogeneity of cultures in a growing number of cases became more expectation than reality. The changing nature of societies elicited corresponding changes in their study.

With the rise of migration within and among nation-states, ethnic groups, especially those marked by culture difference and race, became salient and attracted widespread attention. Their status as minorities became an important consideration in their scholarly treatment. Like all other minorities, their relations to the larger society assumed definitional significance: minorities exist only in relation to a majority.

Earlier approaches that isolated them on the basis of their culture difference and studied them with methods that were hardly more than replications of the way “primitive” and national cultures had been studied, became highly questionable. The lack of fit between observable reality and this isolationist approach (as Fredrik Barth called it in 1969), became ever more obvious. By the 1960s, social science methods for the study of minorities based on structural relations between minority and majority were firmly in place. They were based on the premise that minority and
majority are co-defining. It thus became axiomatic that ethnic groups and all such minorities cannot be properly understood if their relations to the majority with whom they shared a social structure were not taken into account.

As the twentieth century moved toward its second half, anthropology, which like ethnomusicology, had focused on so-called exotic peoples and insular societies, widened its field to include urban areas. Initially following the populations they had traditionally studied—villagers and rural folk—as these migrated to cities, anthropologists, confronted with a new social context, were compelled to re-assess and eventually abandon the old assumptions of homogeneity and self-containment. The work of sociologists such as Robert E. Park and the Chicago school in the first half of the twentieth century strongly suggested more suitable paradigms. Fieldwork in cities thus evolved to fieldwork of cities as it became evident that more than being merely a locale; cities imposed a way of life. Cultural diversity, rather than being a temporary condition that would disappear with assimilation, became a distinctive feature of cities.

Framing the Questions

By the late 1960s, ethnomusicology, too, began doing field work in urban areas. Like their colleagues in anthropology, ethnomusicologists had become increasingly aware of migration and the relocation of people from culture of origin to cultures not their own. But their interest in the musical diversity of cities centered on culture groups and their music as separate entities, rather than as constituent parts of a larger whole. Culture contact was acknowledged as was “borrowing” among cultures, but the dominant view was that each of those cultures were “autonomous” and “self-sustaining” (Wachsmann 1962: 140). They were thus studied as such, much as ethnomusicology’s traditional subjects—folk and non-Western music (Kunst 1969) or the music of foreign cultures (Sachs 1959)—had been.

That most of these musics were labeled “ethnic” in the 1960s did not signal an alignment with social science findings about ethnic groups which subsequently allowed these to be subsumed under the more general category, minority. Rather, ethnomusicology’s approach to ethnic music was a re-assertion of the way it had viewed the music of the societies it had, early in its history, assumed to be self-contained. For ethnomusicology in the mid-twentieth century, the change in social context for what it called ethnic music was not a significant variable in the analysis of those musics. From this point of view, the musical life of complex societies is an agglomeration of discrete entities—wholes in themselves—which can be isolated with no meaningful effects on the others or on the structure to which they belonged.
Why the tenacity of the belief in the self-containment of culture groups despite all the evidence to the contrary? Why, despite ethnomusicology’s long-standing receptivity to social science theories and methods especially to those of anthropology, has ethnomusicology seemed resistant to those that pertained to ethnicity and to the concept of minority as of necessity defined by its relation to a majority? And just as important and instructive as the possible reasons for the resistance, what eventually overcame that resistance in the last two decades of the twentieth century?

History offers important clues in the conditions that prevailed at the time of ethnomusicology’s birth and early life. Conditions specific to music scholarship refer particularly to European thinking as reflected in studies of Western European art music in the nineteenth century. Placed within a larger framework—that of the intellectual climate of the time—these conditions go a long way toward shedding light on the questions posed above.

The View from the Past

Ethnomusicology’s assumption that a society’s or a culture’s music is governed by the rules of a unitary musical system comes from its parent discipline, Western musicology. Acquired through enculturation or through formal study, those rules provide access to a musical culture and make its musical language usable as a symbolic system. Ethnomusicological method built on this premise, adapting techniques similar to those used in linguistics for the study of non-Western music. In a nutshell, just as the linguist studied the sounds of a language to discover which are significant, documented the lexicon, formalized grammatical and syntactic rules, and codified the results into a standard language, the ethnomusicologist made an inventory of presumably significant pitches or sounds, described how they were deployed rhythmically and metrically, and formalized rules governing the organization of pitch, time and form to embody a musical system. Such formalized rules made possible what the eminent anthropologist Clifford Geertz called a description in craft terms (1983: 95), an account of an art form’s internal logic, of how its parts hold together. It led to the belief that sound in itself held the key to how music means. Music as sound, therefore, became the object of study.

The intellectual climate in Europe at the time was one in which this way of thinking found strong support and flourished. It was highly compatible with the concept of the nation-state that, by the nineteenth century, had become firmly established as the basic unit of geopolitical order in the Western world. Its ideal form was articulated by the influential German philosopher, Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). The Staatsnation, or the state, as governing body and guardian of sovereignty, he wrote, and Kulturnation, the embodiment of its culture, was a unity
within geopolitically recognized boundaries. National culture was a monolith—a language, a set of customs and beliefs shared by all citizens. It was homogeneous so that its laws, norms, and values were comprehensible and applicable to all (Herder 1969). Music could thus be labeled by nationality—Chinese music, Japanese music, Indian music, and so forth. A music, is part of a nation’s expressive culture and derives its identity from the nation-state to which it belongs. Nation (as culture) and state were isomorphic, and the boundaries of one were the boundaries of the other.

In this homogeneous, monolithic concept of nation, which had a strong influence on ethnomusicology and the way it approached the musical cultures it studied, there was no room for minorities. Minorities imply a minimal pair—at least two cultures not merely coexisting but interacting, one, as a general rule, dominant over the other in number but more crucially, in power. Minorities were therefore incompatible with the then-prevailing notion of nation-state. From the vantage point of a monolithic culture, groups with a different culture or that could not be assimilated were to be explained away, not incorporated into data and explanation.

In this climate, the seeds of the dichotomy between the musical and the anthropological were sown. The competing claims of each were to stand in the way of adopting the minority as social science concept and adapting it for use in the study of musics made by human groups so designated. The reasons will become evident as the narrative proceeds. What is pertinent at this point is that the powerful music-as-sound-oriented paradigm born of prevailing views on Western European art music and on the European nation-state dominated ethnomusicology through most of ethnomusicology’s history.

The paradigm was a double-edged sword. It accounted for much of ethnomusicology’s achievements in the first half of its life. But in time, the paradigm also became an impediment to the development of conceptual and methodological means that would be needed to deal with the music of multicultural, heterogeneous societies—the very societies with the necessary conditions for the emergence of minorities.

In the United States, this state of affairs was exemplified notably by studies of the music of African Americans and Native Americans in the early twentieth century. Conceptual walls surrounded these musics, reflecting the attitude of the larger society that dated from the early days of the republic and was officially articulated by the first attorney general of the States, Edmund Randolph. Slaves and Indians (as they were called at that time), he proclaimed, were “not constituent members of our society” (Foner 1998:39). Their musics, therefore, were studied accordingly—as isolates. The larger American society within which these groups lived, if it was admitted into the picture at all, served mainly to highlight issues of authenticity. Can the music of Native Americans and African Americans still be
considered authentic if they admitted elements that belonged to other cultures?

Questions of authenticity, in fact, gathered fresh momentum as ethnic groups and other minority issues moved toward center stage. They were questions provoked by the assumed insularity of cultures according to which the more untainted by outside influences a musical practice can be shown to be, the stronger its claim to authenticity. From that standpoint, authenticity is a form of purity—a successful rejection of outside influence.

It took a confluence of factors over a number of decades to finally shake ethnomusicology loose from its earliest assumptions about the nature of the societies within which the musics they studied were made. In the United States, immigration reform brought an influx of hitherto restricted populations from abroad. The Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power movement raised ethnic pride not only among African Americans but among Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans as well. The emphasis on multiculturalism and the defeat of the assimilationist model represented by the melting pot metaphor followed, aided by an increasingly diverse population.

Urban studies and a growing interest in social and cultural complexity reinforced a growing awareness of the ethnic “other” and the reciprocal influences that shaped both that “other” and the society of which it was a part. Wars, famine, other environmental catastrophes, as well as economic conditions and ideological upheavals called attention to refugees and other migrants throughout the world.1 Along with the increasing ease of travel, these phenomena effectively challenged the belief in the insularity of musical cultures, in the power of cultural boundaries to contain them, and consequently, in the equation of authenticity with strict adherence to idealized “original” cultural forms.

Even as these developments were pressing on ethnomusicology to accept the concept of minority as intrinsically linked to the majority, one core issue, deeply embedded in the ethnomusicological canon, needed to be resolved within the discipline. As the above discussion indicates, the name music and minorities gives the human participants and the social dynamics they generate an importance commensurate to music as sound. The name thus presupposes an essential complementarity between the ethnographic and the musical which, until the last quarter of the twentieth century, had been “uneasy bedfellows,” a point David McAllester made in his review of *Music as Culture* (1979) by Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod. Four of the five readers asked to evaluate the book for publication, he reported, had “objected to the mixing of musical and cultural realms” (1980: 306-307).

This dichotomous relation was what Alan Merriam, an anthropologist by formal training and co-founder of the Society for Ethnomusicology, had set out to address when he proposed a definition of music not as sheer sound but as a “complex of
human behavior which resonates throughout the whole cultural organism” (1964: flyleaf). His insistence on the inclusion of social and cultural context in the study of music underscored the importance of ethnographic data. Music as sound and the context within which it not only occurs but from which it derives its power to mean should be like figure and ground, one illuminating and indispensable to the other.

Merriam, however, was swimming against a powerful tide—one sustained by a musicological tradition and the lingering influence of nineteenth century ideas about the nation-state. Clifford Geertz alluded to these twin forces when he observed:

"it is perhaps only in the modern age and in the West that some people...have managed to convince themselves that technical talk about art...is sufficient to a complete understanding of it; that the whole secret of aesthetic power is located in the formal relations among sounds, images, volumes, themes or gestures (1983: 96; emphasis added)."

Indeed, as McAllester’s remarks imply, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, Geertz’s observations still applied to ethnomusicology. Merriam’s re-definition of music was still looking for ways it can be put to practice.

Nonetheless, developments from within and from outside ethnomusicology had begun to converge. The necessary conditions for the emergence and recognition of music and minorities as proper subject for study in ethnomusicology were finally on their way to being met.

Late in the twentieth century, the definitional shift the Merriam had initiated began to resolve the tension, albeit incompletely, between the musical and the ethnographic. This signaled ethnomusicology’s receptivity to data, methods and theories on minorities that other disciplines had developed. What had been regarded as “extra-musical” began to rise from the level of interesting but supplementary, coincidental or parallel information, to the level of data that had explanatory potential. A powerful force had emerged that could move ethnomusicology beyond the sound-centeredness of earlier European ethnomusicological practice toward alternative paradigms.

In 1997, the International Council for Traditional Music approved the establishment of a study group on music and minorities which defined the minority as a category of people structurally part of a larger, dominant society but distinguished from it by race, religion, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status. Individual research activities fell within an institutionally sanctioned category. The door on which evidence from the social sciences had been knocking since mid-century and which was opened a crack with Merriam’s 1964 re-definition, was finally opened fully to the study of all kinds of minority groups and their musical life. An ethnomusicological framework had been constructed within which alternative paradigms free from assumptions of homogeneity and self-containment and open to
ethnographic data could be freely explored.

**Research Activity Exemplified**

Two instances of what Kuhn called research activities exemplify points in the line of development narrated above. The first was undertaken at that point in the history of the discipline when the dominant model for ethnomusicological studies was still grounded in old assumptions, and the problematic relations between the musical (as sound) and the anthropological still awaited resolution. By the time of the second project, the usefulness of minority as concept no longer needed to be defended. Its explanatory potential became the focus instead.

The accounts are highly abbreviated and touch only on points pertinent to this article since the details of the two studies are available in monographs (Reyes Schramm 1975; Reyes 1999). Information from a preliminary study undertaken to test the validity of the second study beyond its specific study subject is added to suggest the wider applicability of the concept, minority, to ethnomusicological research.

**East Harlem**

When in the late 1960s, I began doing fieldwork in New York City’s East Harlem, a community consisting mostly of Latinos and African Americans, most of my colleagues and superiors in graduate school were skeptical although they humored me and put no obstacles in my way. The reasons for the skepticism had to do with location and the nature of the society that I proposed to study. Unlike more conventional ethnomusicological fieldwork sites, it was not distant or “exotic.” It was, in fact, the very opposite: East Harlem was in my “backyard,” just a few miles from where I lived, and it was part of one of the most modern and urbanized cities in the world. It did not have a music that is distinctive of the community, and its musical life was far from homogeneous. To complicate matters, the boundaries of the community were variable depending on whether they were to serve voting districts, school districts, parishes, or simply local custom. And in addition to the predominantly Latino and African American residents, there were small groups of Anglo-Americans, as well as remnants of old European immigrant populations whose music enriched the community as a whole. The Latinos themselves were of different nationalities although most came from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Everything about the subject community was, therefore, anomalous from the perspective of ethnomusicology’s traditional or accepted practice.

From that perspective, the more common approach would have been to create a separate study of each of the musics in the community. Doing so, however, would have defied the facts on the ground. Through their day-to-day interactions and their
membership in a common community, the two major groups on whom I had intended to focus—the Latino and the African American—had become parts of a larger whole. They shared not only common territory but also its resources, and both had put their stamp on the culture of the community. On certain basic issues, like housing and the fight against drugs, their identity as members of the East Harlem community superseded culture group membership. In fact, the cultural label by which the community had been previously known—Spanish Harlem from the days when it had a preponderant Hispanic population—had been totally supplanted by a name based on geography. East Harlem is how the community now identifies itself:

The alternative to the separate-musics approach was to turn to other disciplines that had done work on analogous societies to see how this particular research activity might make use of their experience. Sociology, anthropology, and sociolinguistics had developed models which seemed particularly appropriate. Adapting those models for ethnomusicological use would require a framework within which musical diversity would not be merely a matter of numbers—musics each with a cultural label that can be counted—but a matter of function, the means by which a culturally diverse population coheres to create a society. Constituent musics therefore could not be restricted to intragroup phenomena, involving only members of each group and musical activity exclusive to that group. Individual-group participation in intergroup dynamics had to be assumed in order to assess the impact of each group’s musical activities on those of the other groups with whom they interact, and ultimately, on the whole social organism.

I thus focused my East Harlem project on an investigation of African American and Latino interaction, the existence of which a separate-musics approach would have denied. The yield was an account of musical life that sought to explain the community as a whole. It sought to explain the musical choices that were being made in response to conditions within the community and to East Harlem’s structural relations with New York City—relations that were part of East Harlem’s daily life. Interactions better revealed dynamic processes that were shaping the community’s musical life, among these the interplay of ethnic identity maintenance and shared-community affiliation. In short, taking the two principal groups in East Harlem as constituent minorities in a larger community instead of as autonomous groups seemed not only truer to empirical realities in East Harlem; it also offered the potential of applicability beyond East Harlem to other multi-ethnic communities and their music.

**Vietnamese Forced Migrants**

By the time I began studies of Vietnamese refugees in 1983, ethnic groups and minorities in general were no longer anomalous as units of study in ethnomusicology
although they still lacked clear definition and many studies still isolated individual groups’ music as units of analysis. Nevertheless, studying the music of minorities within the framework of minority-majority relations, although spotty and informal within ethnomusicology at that point, had passed into the realm of the unobjectionable.

Refugees are a more complex kind of minority not only as migrants but in their relations with the majority. When they move from camp to camp or from one host society to another, they are in effect being defined as minority by different majorities. Almost always exacerbated by highly stressful conditions, the concomitant effects on musical life can be dramatic. In part a consequence of their departure from homeland, these effects underscore an important if often neglected variable in studies of migrants as minorities—the coerced nature of that departure in the refugee case.

My studies of Vietnamese refugees focused on this variable which led me to what had hitherto received scant attention: the influence of a second majority on those choices. For Vietnamese resettled in the United States, for example, the larger American society—the more obvious majority—was a tangible presence to which many, particularly in the early stages of that migration, adapted as fully as possible in the belief that they will not be able to return home. But there was another influential majority, the remembered majority that was the Vietnamese society in Vietnam whose members distinguished themselves from those they called “overseas Vietnamese.”

The influence of these majorities—often conflicting—on decisions made by Vietnamese in the United States are too complex to summarize. But of particular interest to this paper are factors that affect judgments on issues of traditionality and authenticity.

The conventional view that authenticity is measured by how faithfully a piece of expressive culture mirrors their antecedent forms in the culture of origin begged for reconsideration. Refugee-resettlers argued against the authenticity even of old, historically validated forms if they had been used for propaganda purposes. Their status as minorities having come in large part from having rejected a political order in the homeland, many “overseas Vietnamese” were especially sensitive to the fact that meanings are altered or distorted when forms are taken out of context. Thus, on the level of meaning and function, what may be considered authentic by Vietnamese in Vietnam may not be authentic to those who are Vietnamese minorities elsewhere and vice versa.

This line of thinking puts the burden of authenticity not only on fidelity to material form—sound in the case of music—but also on the function that such form serves. If form and content, medium and message, cannot be made to coincide, content, meaning or function, for many refugee-resettlers, outweighs form.
Sudanese Refugees in Kampala

To see whether findings from the Vietnamese refugee study might be applicable beyond that particular minority, I went to Uganda where in 1998, the ratio of Ugandan to refugee was seven to one countrywide, and in border areas, one to one. The manifestations of the three-part relationship between migrant, home country, and country of resettlement were exemplified by a group of Sudanese who lived in Kampala. Most were Dinka and Nuer. They were all Christians but had different affiliations: Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, Anglican and Methodist.

Whereas in Sudan, they had maintained their tribal and denominational identities, worshiping in their respective churches, and singing songs in their respective tribal languages, in Kampala, their changed circumstances, the limited resources available to refugees, and the small numbers on a per denomination basis dictated a different arrangement. Setting aside denominational differences, they built a mud church on land loaned them by a Ugandan. They worshipped jointly, conducted bible classes, met socially, and offered temporary refuge for Sudanese newcomers regardless of tribal or religious affiliation. They thus subsumed their denominational and tribal identities under the label, Christian. This was internally adaptive in Kampala, where promoting cohesion within the group was more important than maintaining their tribal differences, and it was adaptive in the Ugandan context where that identity carried more weight and was more easily recognizable than denominational and tribal identities.

There were aspects of musical life that attested to the tug-and-pull of different cultural and social claims. Of these, the choice of language for songs is the most readily observable. Church hymns were sung mostly in English in order to transcend the linguistic barriers posed by their different tribal languages. Their choice of English rather than Arabic which many of them spoke was both adaptive in Kampala where English was widely spoken. But the language choice was also a response to conditions in the homeland—the Arabic-Black African, Islam-Christianity conflict that was at the center of their life in Sudan and accounted largely for their departure from it.

The Past to the Future

These brief accounts of research activities stand at points in a line of development that trace the evolution of music and minorities from being an ethnomusicological non-entity to becoming a productive conceptual tool. In the course of the narrative, answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this article may have suggested themselves. But placing the narrative as a whole within a broader framework—one that transcends the boundaries of individual disciplines—can yield generalizations
that reach farther into the future.

In his influential volume *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1996 [1962]), Thomas S. Kuhn takes the paradigm as a core issue within the large framework of intellectual history. He defines a paradigm as a “constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of the community (ibid.: 175).” Out of this constellation is extracted a model or exemplar that becomes the basis for a modus operandi. A paradigm, therefore, combines something akin to ideological conditioning and a methodological road map. It is a powerful combination of external and internal factors, of objective and subjective elements, that becomes even more powerful with frequency of use. The greater the number of users, the more powerful the consensus and vice versa, in a mutually reinforcing pattern. The sense of safety and of legitimacy conferred by well-established precedents rises accordingly. The paradigm becomes more deeply entrenched within the discipline, qualifying the paradigm’s use as “normal” or standard practice.

But a paradigm represents safety as well as risk—the safety of being protected by a standard on one hand, and the risk of obsolescence on the other, for no paradigm retains its methodological efficacy indefinitely. Paradigms therefore should inspire both respect and fear. The grounds for respect are clear: its capacity to explain and clarify is what brought it adherents in the first place. The grounds for fear rest in its built-in tendency to resist innovation and to turn to bias. This is what happens when research, to justify its findings, relies upon the power of “normal” practice rather than upon empirical and intellectual defensibility. Hence, when anomalies arise, i.e., when discordances appear between observable reality and paradigm-induced expectations, it may not be the paradigm that gives way. It continues in use long after it is no longer able to rise to the challenge of fresh information. Observations are made to fit what is expected; as psychologists have noted, we see what we expect to see. Or, to borrow Stephen Jay Gould’s turn of phrase, the paradigm persists not out of a factual lack but out of a conceptual lock (1989: 276).

At this juncture, Kuhn writes, two things will be necessary to effect a paradigm shift. First, there must be a critical number of anomalies to challenge entrenched expectations. Second, there must be a competing or alternative paradigm. Given the history of paradigms—the way they tend to numb the critical eye once embedded in a discipline, and the rewards their use offers to practitioners within a discipline—it is not surprising that often, the necessary impetus for putting forward a new paradigm comes from outside that discipline.

The parallels between the story of music and minorities and Kuhn’s model of paradigm entrenchment and paradigm shifts are thus cautionary (in light of past events) as well as instructive, and prescriptive for the present and the future. They bring to mind the trajectory that ethnomusicology might have taken sooner rather
than later, and the value of looking beyond the confines of one’s discipline. Disciplinary insularity has cost ethnomusicology the long neglect of music as they are brought to life by groups marked by gender, race, ethnicity, and other such cultural markers—groups, that is, which until they were recognized as minorities, had no paradigmatic home.

But even here, the light of the past shines on the future. A look at the beginning of ethnomusicology recalls an academic ancestor called Musikethnologie, and subsequently a lineage that includes anthropologists, linguists, and folklorists among others. Ethnomusicology has a historic claim to being interdisciplinary. And in being true to that claim, by taking a closer look at what lies beyond the doors that its antecedents, practitioners of Musikethnologie, and a disciplinary network of scholars have opened for it, ethnomusicology will find promising leads to its own future.

Note
1 The term migrant is used here in what has now become common usage in the scholarly literature, i.e., as generic term that includes those who move across as well as within geo-political boundaries.

References
Reyes, Adelaida. 1999. Songs of the Caged, Songs of the Free. Music and The Vietnamese

