

## **Meeting the New: What 21st–Century Educators Can Learn from the Earliest “Ethnomusicologists” about the Appreciation of Music**

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It may seem paradoxical to argue that twenty-first-century music educators, in search of a pedagogical perspective that meets the needs of our Internet-savvy young students, should study the way the earliest “ethnomusicologists” wrote about music: those reports by Jean de Léry, Simon de la Loubère, Jean Chardin, and others who, prior to 1700, traveled far from their homes in Europe, met musical customs very much at variance with those they were familiar with, and felt impelled to comment on this new and startling music. Paradox or no, the reason I think it is so useful to study these early writings is one that transcends the centuries, and all the changes in music and musical technology. The reason is ethical.

In those centuries-old writings by de Léry, et al., there are two things that still are very much present in our classrooms today—in our students and, if we are honest, likely in ourselves as well. First, a praiseworthy and educationally efficient desire to appreciate music different from what is familiar. And second, its opposite: the desire to swiftly sum up and then dismiss—or even scorn—what is new.

No amount of technology, per se, can alter this second attitude. What can alter it is a change of ethical awareness. Students need to be made aware, in a way that doesn’t seem “preachy” or patronizing, that there can be a dual response to what is new, so they can discover for themselves which looks better to them. Which brings us face-to-face with the value of looking at these early ethnomusicologists—namely that the distance of the centuries enables us to talk with our students about this fundamentally ethical issue without immediately stirring up current musical prejudices: against rap, country-and-western, or opera. In fact, it has been my experience that once students learn about the issues involved 300 or 400 years ago, they are unanimous in their opinion: they object to the prejudices of centuries ago, and applaud the honest desire in some of these explorers of new musical territory to stretch their ears and their human sympathies. Understanding all of this enables students to know their own minds better, and to be in a far stronger position to object to prejudices in themselves and their classmates.

I would go so far as to say that an increased awareness of the ethics involved in listening to “new” or “different” music helps every other aspect of music

education go better. For the entire point is to introduce students to what is new—whether it be new genres of music, or new perspectives on music that is familiar to them. Therefore, the most fundamental concept in music education isn't specifically about music at all: it is about our personal ethics, our attitude toward what is new or different.

### What Is “Appreciation”?

Some decades back, the most common title for an introductory course in music was “Music Appreciation.” The term is less often applied today, yet it remains the key to what we are attempting to accomplish in our classrooms. Appreciation, as the great American educator Eli Siegel defined it, is “being able to see something as it is and liking it at the same time.” He offered this definition in his March 31, 1950, lecture titled “Aesthetic Realism and Appreciation,” in which he also laid out the ethical significance of the matter:

The word *appreciation* ... is one of those words synonymous with life itself. When a person doesn't like himself, one of the chief reasons is that he has failed to appreciate what he should appreciate. Whenever we fail to appreciate something deeply it's because we appreciate something else too much. We are lopsided somewhere. Just as when a person fails to be excited by something that should excite him, he appreciates indifference too much—so when some people cannot see with any greatness or depth of feeling what deserves to be seen, it means that something else has been given too much value. ...It is very easy not to appreciate something, which is the same as not liking it enough. What most people don't see is that in the process of being unfair to the thing that could be appreciated, they are also unfair to themselves, and they also feel guilty.<sup>1</sup>

As educators, we cannot sensibly avoid thinking about these ethical issues. They simply affect the inner life of our students too much, and being oblivious to that inward situation is hardly to be kind—a prerequisite for any true educator. The ethical issue constantly arises, since our classrooms are more culturally diverse than ever. If we wish to engage our students' interest, we simply need ethnomusicological awareness; we need to present diverse kinds of music and relate them to each other with depth, clarity, and excitement. And certainly, without any prejudice—stated or unstated.

Meanwhile, there can be resistance. Whether we ask Asian students to appreciate early Louis Armstrong, Polish immigrants to see value in the singing of the great Egyptian vocalist Um Kulthum, African American students to care about Haydn and Palestrina, or perhaps, a suburban white student, whose iPod

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1. *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*, issue 672 (19 February 1986), 1. Eli Siegel's entire lecture was published serially in issues 672–674.

contains no pre-2000 music, to listen with open ears to the music of Henry Purcell, we often come face-to-face with what seems to be intractable musical bias.

Why, a student will ask, do I have to like *all this*? I have my own music! Isn't that enough?

Teachers need to be able to give a convincing answer, and as a first step we need to ask ourselves what it would take for a student to trust *anything* we might say. After all, we likely come from a different generation, and quite possibly, a different cultural background.

Thus, if we are asking students to look honestly at their own prejudices, we must first ask for honesty from ourselves: how might we be guilty of stylistic and cultural prejudice? It is an unusual music educator who listens with equal relish to Garth Brooks, Anton Webern, Gaetano Donizetti, and Ravi Shankar.

When students know that a teacher is aware of gaps in his or her own appreciation of music, is trying honestly to do better, and is not afraid to say so publicly, they are more likely to listen to that teacher more seriously. Instead of feeling patronized when a teacher encourages a wider appreciation of music, there can be a friendlier atmosphere in the classroom where the objective is: "Let's all encourage each other to do better. Music deserves it."

Sometimes the best way to counter prejudice is to speak of it directly. Often, however, it does help to bring a sense of wide historical perspective to the issue. That is why I emphasize the value of studying the responses of these early writers on "world music." An added benefit is that in the process students will also be introduced to a great diversity of musical cultures; we do want our students—simply as good citizens and human beings—to develop a large feeling of cross-cultural respect, and ethnomusicology can help. In every region of the globe, in every century, humanity has pursued the creation of music; and this speaks highly for people everywhere. It does imply something beautiful at work in the depths of humanity.

A text I have found useful for these purposes is Frank Harrison's celebrated anthology, *Time, Place and Music*; it will also be the primary text for this article.<sup>2</sup> And to be clear: the reason for the quotation marks around "ethnomusicologists" in the title is that these early travelers certainly did not see themselves as involved in the scientific understanding of world music. They traveled for theological, political, and business reasons. Nevertheless, they heard a new kind of music, were affected by it, and described the effect in words—which is, at heart, what modern ethnomusicologists do as well. Whether modern or ancient, the ethical question remains: does my response arise from a hope to appreciate

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2. Frank Harrison, *Time, Place and Music* (Amsterdam: Frits Knuf, 1973). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this paper are those Harrison used. Note: where possible Harrison used historical English translations; hence the unusual spellings and, to our ear, odd turns of grammar.

what is different from myself and the culture I am familiar with, or does it arise from a desire (likely unconscious) to depreciate it as a way of enhancing my own sense of superiority, personally and culturally?

### Jean de Léry (1534–1611)

Jean de Léry spent approximately ten months from March 1557 to January 1558 near what is now Rio de Janeiro. A young Calvinist minister (de Léry was just twenty-two when he sailed from Europe), he embodied both the fine and the ethically dubious aspects of his religious background.

Calvinism was then a new and fervent movement. Its leaders were so zealous that they did not shrink from burning theological opponents at the stake. In 1553, around the time de Léry began his theological studies in Geneva, Michael Servetus, the noted Spanish theologian and physician who discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood, greatly displeased Calvin with his denial of the Trinity. For this heresy, Servetus was burnt at the stake.

The polemical nature of his training is reflected in various comments de Léry made about native musicians—critical comments whose true target seems to be the Catholic Church back in Europe, with which Calvinism was then locked in ferocious battle.<sup>3</sup> Of the maraca-playing *Caraiibes*, the “priestly” class of the Tupinambá, he writes:

And you would not know anything better to compare them with, in the state they were then, than the jingle-men around those humbugs who, imposing themselves on poor people in our part of the world, carry from place to place the shrines of St. Anthony, or St. Bernard, and other such instruments of idolatry.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Many battles were fought between the Huguenots and the Catholics during the 1550s; the Treaty of Chateau Cambresis was not signed until 1559. The governor of the colony in Brazil, Admiral Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, was at first sympathetic to the Calvinists. To combat the growing Jesuit influence in the colony, as well as a neighboring Portuguese settlement, he personally asked Calvin to send Protestant ministers. Those who arrived from Geneva in 1557 included de Léry. See *Colonial Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28–29, in which, in an essay entitled “Portuguese Settlement,” H. B. Johnson writes of what came of these efforts: “Straight from Geneva, dogmatic, rigid and imbued with Calvin’s steely will, they soon propelled the group into theological disputes that came to focus on the nature of the Eucharist: for Léry and his co-religionists, the Catholics’ adherence to transubstantiation in the midst of a society of savage cannibals was too much to swallow. Angered by the disruptive activities of the Calvinists whose resistance he was unable to break, Villegagnon suddenly reverted to an orthodox Catholicism, abandoned the colony and sailed back to France in 1559, where he finished his days as a member of the ultra-Catholic party of the Guises.”

4. de Léry calls them “prophets” and explicitly relates them to Catholic friars. Harrison, *Time, Place and Music*, 18 and 21.

His Calvinism also shows in assuming the “confused howlings” and “violent” dancing he observed among the Tupinambá were indisputable signs of demonic possession.<sup>5</sup> He saw, in this regard, what his training predisposed him to see. This is a cautionary tale; it is so easy to diminish and distort the meaning of what is new and different; and the metaphor of “howling,” derivative from animal sound, is certainly depreciatory.<sup>6</sup>

Yet de Léry also had in abundance something all fieldworkers need: a courageous and sympathetic desire to know.<sup>7</sup> Saying, “I was sure of the friendship of certain good old men who lived in [the] village,” he enters the very building from which the “demonic” sounds arose—in order to “contemplate” them better.<sup>8</sup> Given that this meant entering the Devil’s den, to be surrounded by those who made a habit of cannibalism, one is left with awe at the strength of his desire to know.

Moreover, despite his theological training—which would dispose him to be repulsed by anything associated with devil-worship—it is clear that de Léry cared for the Tupinambá, and was seen by them as a friend. While understandably surprised, given his “Psalm book” background, that people who “do not know what the art of music is . . . could sing so well together,” he unstintingly praises the great rhythmic precision of their collective singing. Of one melody he is almost passionate: “I was altogether captivated . . . every time I remember it with beating heart, it seems to me that I still have [it] in my ears.”<sup>9</sup> Keep in mind that he wrote this in 1578, twenty years after he left Brazil. That is a long time for a melody to retain its power.

5. *Ibid.*, 19–21. Notable are citations from Jean Bodin’s *Démonomanie* (Paris, 1581), a then very up-to-date text on Satan and his lures.

6. Diminishing of the world (and people) different from oneself as a means of building up oneself is a universal human temptation, and has been a central topic among scholars who apply the method of Aesthetic Realism. The hope for contempt can be observed in every culture known to anthropological research, as is the fact that every culture, in its own way, is critical of it. See Arnold Perey, “Oksapmin Society and World View” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973), in particular, chapter 10; and Perey, *Gwe: Young Man of New Guinea* (New York: Waverly Place Press, 2005).

7. The valuable combination of warmth of spirit with clear-eyed reporting is not only evident in his writing about the Tupinambá, but also in his eyewitness account of the famine at Sancerre in 1573. See Julien Coudry, ed., *The Huguenot War* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1969), 228–233.

8. Harrison, *Time, Place and Music*, 22.

9. *Ibid.* Presumably de Léry’s respect for the Tupinambá was either shared by some of his companions, or at least conveyed to them. Interestingly, one of de Léry’s companions was named Jean Rousseau. Since he too was recruited from Geneva, this Rousseau is plausibly an ancestral relative of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. While full documentation is not available, my research leads me to believe he is a distant cousin. Thus one may speculate: could stories have circulated in the Rousseau family about the Tupinambá which may have sparked thought in the philosopher that helped lead to his notions of the “noble savage”?

What was it that affected him so deeply? I believe it was the presence (in a form naturally unique to Tupinambá culture) of the universal aesthetic impulsion of humanity. Said Eli Siegel, in a 1949 lecture, "Aesthetic Realism and Beauty": "All beauty is a making one of opposites, and the making one of opposites is what we are going after in ourselves."<sup>10</sup> Looking closely at the language de Léry uses, it is clear that he is responding to the presence of opposites. He observes, within this "demonic" music, the juxtaposition of continuous "howling" and sudden silence. There is ferocity and sweetness in the singing; the voices are raucous but, he tells us, also gracious and of a "delicious agreement." There is soft mumbling and sharp interjection. The dancers leap in the air and slowly circle on the ground. And the text of the song joins sorrow and rejoicing.

### Contempt versus Good Will

What we observe in de Léry is the combat of two different attitudes of mind, two different purposes. In Aesthetic Realism, the philosophic method he founded in 1941,<sup>11</sup> Eli Siegel explained that the mind can never be at its most perceptive unless it is impelled by good will.<sup>12</sup> By good will he meant the hope

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10. *The Modern Quarterly Beginnings of Aesthetic Realism: 1922–1923* (New York: Definition Press, 1997), 13.

11. For a brief history of Aesthetic Realism as philosophic methodology see Edward Green, "A Note on Two Conceptions of Aesthetic Realism," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45, no. 4 (October 2005): 438–440. For an overview of its particular value for the understanding of music see Edward Green, "Donald Francis Tovey, Aesthetic Realism, and the Need for a Philosophic Musicology," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 36, no. 2 (December 2005): 227–248, and also the chapter I co-authored with Alan Shapiro, "Music of Every Culture Has Something in Common and Can Teach Us About Ourselves: Using the Aesthetic Realism Teaching Method," in Carol Frierson-Campbell, ed., *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006). To place Aesthetic Realism's view of music in terms of the social sciences, see a presentation I co-authored with Arnold Perey for the April 2004 conference of ESCOM, titled "Aesthetic Realism: A New Foundation for Interdisciplinary Musicology," [www.perey-anthropology.net/world\\_musiclescom\\_1.htm](http://www.perey-anthropology.net/world_musiclescom_1.htm); Internet, accessed 15 June 2007. For a representative sample of scholarly writings on the Aesthetic Realism teaching method by educators in other disciplines, see Prabha Sahasraduhne, ed., *Proceedings of the 31st InSEA World Congress* (New York: Center for International Art Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, 2003). The conference was titled "International Conversations through Art: Art Education for the New Millennium," and papers by six educators using the Aesthetic Realism teaching method are included. Among the subject matters discussed were the visual arts and the teaching of general science at the high school level. See also Arnold Perey, "The Aesthetic Realism of Eli Siegel as a Teaching Method in Anthropology," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (November 1976): 46–48.

12. Edward Green, "Biography as Ethics: The Battle between Contempt and Respect in the Mind of Felix Mendelssohn," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 37, no. 2 (December 2006): 157–166.

to like the world outside oneself as much as is honestly possible; the wish that what is different from oneself be as strong and as beautiful as it can be. The very definition of intelligence, he argued, is “the ability of a self to become at one with the new.”<sup>13</sup>

This emphasis on good will leads logically to the question: is the opposite—the hope for contempt—the greatest enemy of education? It is; and I am grateful to Eli Siegel for having explained that fact—the first educator to do so.<sup>14</sup>

Whether contempt was active centuries ago as an explorer listened to music on the shores of a strange new land, an ocean away from his homeland, or whether the contempt is observable right now, this very morning, in an elementary school classroom, it is equally destructive of honest music appreciation. Imagine a child hearing music in a classroom that is very different from what she heard on the radio during breakfast, and scorning this new music because it was different. Not because it wasn't musical; simply because it was different.

In both cases, the twenty-first-century child and the late-sixteenth-century traveler, we can observe a desire to establish “stability” for oneself in the midst of the newness by denying value to what is different from oneself.

Contempt, Eli Siegel explained, is the “disposition in every person to think he will be for himself by making less of the outside world.”<sup>15</sup> It is the attempt, largely unconscious, to build up oneself in one's own mind by hoping to find weaknesses in other people. If intelligence implies the ability to find value, then contempt automatically increases stupidity. Contempt gives a person a vested interest in missing out on goodness in other people and other things. Once one has associated victory for oneself with diminishing others, the discovery of value in the world outside oneself must be taken as a defeat.

As we see in de Léry, one person may have *both* ways of mind: good will and contempt. Certainly it is better to have some good will than none, but a non-integrated mind is still that—and cannot be said to be as efficient as one that sticks to an honest and kind purpose. Still, of Harrison's early travelers, de Léry may have done the best, ethically.

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13. From Eli Siegel, *Definitions and Comment: Being a Description of the World*, an unpublished work, (c. 1950). The manuscript is deposited at the Aesthetic Realism Foundation in New York City.

14. See Eli Siegel, *Psychiatry, Economics, Aesthetics*, originally published in 1946, and now included as a chapter in Siegel, *Self and World: An Explanation of Aesthetic Realism* (New York: Definition Press, 1981).

15. Eli Siegel, *The Modern Quarterly Beginnings of Aesthetic Realism: 1922–1923*. (New York: Definition Press), 13.

### We Are Unique; We Are Representative.

When we meet what is new, a sign of our intelligence is the ability to do two things: recognize where it is unique and how it has honest kinship with other things. We can err either way—by making something more isolated than it truly is, or by too swiftly equating it with something else, something more familiar.

Thus, it is instructive to compare de Léry's notation of various Tupinambá melodies with the same melodies "emended" by Mersenne in 1636—in particular the melody Harrison marks "a" and then "f" on page 203 of his text.<sup>16</sup> Mersenne's versions are far more accessible to European comprehension.

#### de Léry



*Camide-iouue, camide-iouue, heurauech*

#### Mersenne

f)

*Camide ionue. He he he he.*

*Heu heura heura uechi*

original minim in transcriptions of a & f]

Harrison indicates that he thinks what Mersenne has done is correct.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps, but caution is appropriate. Not only was de Léry the "ear-witness," he was musically literate and oversaw the 1585 French edition—the third edition, but the first to contain musical examples. And the first melody contained in that edition (Harrison's "a") is surely remarkable. Its range is a diminished third, with C as pivot, surrounded by B and D-flat. We now know that such melodies, with extreme narrowness of compass, are not infrequent among native peoples of the Western hemisphere.

16. Harrison, *Time, Place and Music*, 203.

17. *Ibid.*, 204.



It appears de Léry had attempted to put this one down as he heard it. The notation was thus likely far closer to the sonic reality than Mersenne could have realized.<sup>18</sup> Yet rather than credit de Léry—a “non-academic informant”—the scholarly Mersenne, a man who had never left Europe, “corrects” the tune in a way that forces this distant culture to be commensurate with his own. Again, a cautionary tale—of both cultural and academic presumption.

Meanwhile, I don’t want to seem wrongly harsh in what I say about Mersenne; he was a great musicologist and faced the same elemental problem we and our students, have now. The mind always begins with what is familiar in its quest to understand the new. That is why, for example, all languages are rich in metaphor. Moreover, a desire to apprehend kinship with people of an “alien” culture is a sign of a mind that hopes to be both kind and respectful. Here, quite plausibly, we see a reflection of the positive aspects of de Léry’s and Mersenne’s Christian heritage.

The question, from an ethical as well as a methodological point of view, is *how* we relate our own culture to the new culture we meet in the field. Is it with a hope to respect what is different from ourselves, or to have contempt? And with de Léry—whose friendliness gained him large access to the Tupinambá—we largely sense respect, an honest hope to like what is new. It is the state of mind without which successful ethnomusicology cannot exist.<sup>19</sup> And, quite plainly, the same could be said of every other branch of musical study.

Just about every music educator has heard a student firmly declare: “I like rock and hate opera.” Or, “I like Baroque music, and hate that modern stuff.” Or, “I like rap and hate country music.” The variants are endless; we’ve all heard entire genres of music summed up this way. Yet, the vast majority of these same students would never think of saying: “I like Greeks and hate Italians,” or “I like Caribbean people and hate Koreans.” They know better, or at least are willing to acknowledge that it’s only fair to judge people individually—by their character: by how good they are *as people*. It is an eye-opening (and ear-opening) experience for many students to have the parallel brought to their attention, as they can see just how prejudicial (and lazy!) it is to judge music in that “lump-sum” way, rather than to look for what is good in every culture.

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18. The use by de Léry of an unusual “key” signature (a single D-flat) is not difficult to explain, for in the late-sixteenth century there was no settled or agreed-upon convention for the use of such signatures. There are many examples (including in Calvinist Psalm books) of musicians simply placing accidentals at the beginning of a stave on the basis of notational convenience rather than theoretical “rightness.”

19. In Siegel’s *Definitions and Comment, Being a Description of the World*, (see note 16), there is this definition: “Liking is the feeling that something outside of oneself has something in common with oneself, and that that something in common is for one.” My comments are based on this understanding of the word.

As Duke Ellington famously said, “There are only two kinds of music: good and bad.”

### **Simon de la Loubère (1642–1729)**

I turn next to a person, also quoted at length by Harrison, who largely represents a mind annoyed at what is new and what is different from his own cultural background—and who wishes to diminish it in behalf of ego-supremacy. Simon de la Loubère was inducted into the French Academy in 1693—the year his book on Siam, *Du Royaume de Siam*, appeared in English translation. (It was published two years earlier in nearly simultaneous editions in both Paris and Amsterdam.) Harrison informs us of Loubère’s interest in mathematical and literary matters; Loubère had a certain richness of mind there. And his modern editor, David K. Wyatt, argues for the solidity of his Siamese observations.<sup>20</sup>

It is hard to avoid the sense that Loubère, sent by Louis XIV to Siam as an ambassador, was a snob and viewed the Siamese with a general contempt. Consider this paragraph:

They understand not more than the Chineses the diversity of Parts in composition; they understand not the Variety of the Parts; they do all sing Unisons. Their Instruments are not well chose, and it must be thought that those, wherein there appears any knowledge of Musick, have them brought from other parts.<sup>21</sup>

There is an unsavory quality to this prose. First, Loubère is not satisfied depreciating the Siamese; the Chinese also receive his contempt. As a member of the French upper-crust, he seems impelled by a desire to support their—and his own—sense of cultural superiority.

Loubère also implies that monophonic music is weaker than music with “parts.” For an educated Catholic, who knew the esteem in which the church held Gregorian chant, this point of view is astonishing. This inability to relate oneself accurately to others seems an instance of almost willful amnesia.

The ethnomusicological implication is that the hope for contempt weakens perception. We can also see that weakness of perception in his inability to notice the subtleties within the monophony of the Siamese; one could ask whether what he met was monophony at all. Far more likely it was a kind of heterophony. (All this, of course, gives a teacher the chance to play instances of heterophony from around the world—including from our own culture; but that is a separate pedagogical issue.)

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20. Harrison, *Time, Place and Music*, 86. Harrison is quoting Wyatt’s editorial introduction to Loubère’s *The Kingdom of Siam* (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), viii.

21. *Ibid.*

Lastly there is the contempt of implying that any instrument of quality the Siamese possess must have originated elsewhere. Although some Siamese instruments reflect Chinese and Islamic influence, in this passage, and even more explicitly elsewhere, Loubère assumes that a musical culture without notation or mathematical theory must be aesthetically crippled. We all know this is hardly the case.

On the subject of “indigenous” versus “foreign” instruments, I wonder—as a “thought experiment”—what Loubère would have said if someone pointed out to him the Islamic roots of many of European string instruments. It is likely he would have had a fair degree of ego-discomfort learning that his “superior” musical culture was so indebted to one he likely considered inferior.

Loubère’s mind was as much involved with European issues of power as de Léry’s had been with European theology. Where the Siamese resemble the French in their musical practice there is a positive tone to his prose, but where they resemble the practice of a neighboring European nation, there is disapproval:

They have neither Cadence, nor quaver no more than the *Castillians*: but they sometimes sing like us without words, which the *Castillians* think very strange; and in the stead of words, they only say *noi, noi* as we do say *lan-la-lari*. I have not remark’d one single Air, whose measure was triple, whereas those are without comparison the most familiar to the *Spaniards*.<sup>22</sup>

The Spanish and Castillians are included not to shed light on Siamese music, but to affirm the superiority of France, and its culture, to any other nation in Europe.

Loubère’s statement about the striking lack of music in triple time is one that seems borne out by more recent observations of music from Southeast Asia, and so gives us historical perspective on the rarity of triple meter in this region of the world. Thus, despite the general and rather gratuitous contempt in his account of the Siamese, there is information to be gleaned from Loubère’s observations, and occasionally he even seems to be pleased with what he meets. For example, he writes:

The March which they sounded at the entrance of the Kings Ambassadors, was a confused noise with all these Instruments together: The like is sounded in attending on the King of *Siam*; and this noise, as fantastical and odd as it is, has nothing unpleasant, especially on the River.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 88.

Further, there is little reason to question his description of the instruments he saw and how they were played. The names he gives are still in use: for example, *Tapon* and *Cong* (by which he clearly means *Gong*). Modern observations tend to support his descriptions of performance practice. For example, these words about the *Clong* (what we would now call the *Klong thad*) still reflect its current use in the *Piphat* ensemble:

They set them upon one of the Skins, and they beat them on the other, themselves sitting cross-leg'd before their Drums. They do also make use of this sort of Drum to accompany the Voice, but they seldom sing with these Drums but to dance.<sup>24</sup>

An interesting question arises from the notation of the Siamese song included in the Amsterdam edition of Loubère's book.<sup>25</sup> The song spans a sixth and uses six diatonic tones: G to E, with A as the implicit "tonic." It also implies an intriguingly irregular, and largely accelerating, colotomic pattern. Since "modern" Siamese music tends to be organized in pentatonic scales, often derivative from a collection of seven tones dividing the octave roughly in "diatonic equal temperament," what do we have here? A misinterpretation of a pentatonic tune, or possible evidence of an earlier care for sexatonic organization?

And what are we to make of the unusual (in terms of more recent Southeast Asian music) rhythmic design of this melody? Is it a false transcription, reshaping Asian reality to suit European musical taste, or an indication that Siamese tastes have had their own evolving aesthetic history and that the music proceeded quite differently 350 years ago?

### **Respect for the Past: A Means of Combating Contempt**

Since ethnomusicology and anthropology have done enormous ethical service in combating the contempt that so often plagues the world as people of one culture think about another—the contempt that makes for racism and a hurtful, aggressive sense of nationalism—we need to consider the unintended consequences of our own possible lack of historical orientation as we teach music. If we rob a people of the fullness of their history, are we making them less than they truly are? Less deep in time? Is this contempt? And will our students be badly affected by it?

By not looking vigorously into the history (the technical history, not just the legendary history) of world musical cultures, we may inadvertently give students the impression that the music of other cultures is "unchanging" or

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24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.* Harrison includes a reproduction of the Amsterdam plate containing this melody at the end of his text, on an unnumbered page.

“timeless,” hemmed in by traditions that altered slowly, if at all, over centuries. If traditions have changed, the tendency is to credit such changes to the impact of the West.

All this is exceedingly unlikely to be true. Yes, it is obvious that “traditional” cultures were deeply affected by Western imperialism. Yet, was there no *internal* drive toward innovation? We know how rapidly musical styles changed in western Europe during the centuries in which it, too, was a pre-industrial culture with relatively stable religious and sociological structures. But how different is the Gregorian chant of 800 from the *ars nova* of 1300, let alone the troubadour songs of the early 1100s and the *organa* of Leonin at that century’s end?

Why would other cultures not be similar in the pace of their stylistic evolutions? Might not they too, on their own terms, have altered their technical musical language greatly over a 500-year period? Or will we, from lack of adequate investigation, fall prey to the implicitly racist notion that Europeans were impelled by a more adventurous and inventive musicality than other people?

As I implied earlier, these issues have very practical implications for our classrooms. One could even say, it is a pedagogical—and ethical—emergency. Again and again in the history of the world, conquerors have suppressed the culture and traditions of the people they subjugated, leaving them rootless. Forced to see themselves without an anchorage in time, the “lower classes” were at an emotional disadvantage. It was as if they did not have as complete a connection to the earth, and therefore did not deserve equally to own that earth. They were victims of the contempt of those with more power.

As educators, we need to be aware of this, since many of our students (and their families) are in the position of victims. It simply will not work to encourage our students to give up prejudice and contempt toward other cultures if we act oblivious of how they themselves have endured the terrible effects of that evil. As a practical matter, I suggest that as we think of musical examples to illustrate any point whatsoever, we should consider the usefulness of making the point with historical depth.

For example, to introduce students to the concept of syncopation, we could present Stravinsky as a modern example and then provide several companions from earlier European music history, such as (thinking backwards) Beethoven, Handel, and Machaut. The same thing could be done with music from the African American tradition: show the syncopations in rap and give it an evolutionary pedigree, which might include swing, ragtime, the spirituals, and even West African interlocking drum patterns. Not only will this make the phenomenon of syncopation more vivid and richer in students’ minds, they will also learn more about *both* cultures. And if a teacher wants to go further and show how these cultural streams interact and affect each other—all to the good!

Before moving on to our third “early ethnomusicologist,” let us return one last time to Loubère and have some good-natured humor at his expense—as a way of seeing for ourselves the danger contempt poses to honest musical perception. Being a snob, Loubère is understandably discomfited that anyone else—let alone a heathen—could possibly view *his* culture as less substantial than their own. Vanity-discomfort and a desire to recoup lost superiority can be seen in his account of this experience:

The King of Siam, without shewing himself, heard several *Airs* of our *Opera* on the violin, and it was told us that he did not think them of a movement grave enough: Nevertheless the *Siamese* have nothing very grave in their Songs; and whatever they play on their Instruments, even in their Kings march, is very brisk.<sup>26</sup>

### Jean Chardin (1643–1715)

The final section of this essay concerns Jean Chardin. He had first-hand knowledge of Persia from several trips there as a young man taking part in his family’s diamond business. A Huguenot, Chardin had no love for the Catholics and, like de Léry, enjoyed seeing Catholicism in trouble. Recounting how a Cistercian prefect failed to impress when performing church songs before a Muslim prince, Chardin dryly remarks “The church-tunes did not sufficiently delight the Prince,” and tells us the prefect was obliged to switch over to the then-equivalent of pop music—namely “*airs de cour* in Italian and Spanish.”<sup>27</sup>

Where Loubère tells of Siamese criticism of European music with an obvious sense of personal affront, Chardin seems to delight in relating that the Catholic missionaries had trouble attracting Persians to their services. For example, there is this charming, somewhat tongue-in-cheek passage:

At first many people came to [the Cistercian] church at Tiflis, attracted by the novelty of the service and of the small-scale music for four or five voices mingled with a lute and a spinet; at present only four or five poor people come who have gained something from the missionaries.<sup>28</sup>

Interest in the music paled rapidly; not so interest in obtaining alms from the missionaries! (The monetary implications are even clearer in the original French, as the word “gagner” is used).<sup>29</sup>

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26. *Ibid.*, 87.

27. *Ibid.*, 128.

28. *Ibid.*, 127.

29. *Ibid.*, 120.

If the Persians had trouble with European music, so did Chardin with their music. After hearing a royal ensemble he noted that the prince “enjoyed it very much ... as for me, I found nothing agreeable about it; on the contrary it seemed to me rough and ill synchronized.”<sup>30</sup> Later he wrote, “they do not play [their woodwind instruments] with as much harmony as is done with us.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, Chardin’s ears were not entirely closed to the new; he is happy to tell us when he thinks the Persians do something well—in fact, better than Europeans:

They make a kind of carillon with porcelain or with brass vessels of various sizes arranged in order, which they strike with two small sticks that are long and thin; this makes more agreeable harmony than a clock carillon, and is much more lively.<sup>32</sup>

Incidentally, this offers further evidence for the swift evolutions of musical taste in non-European cultures, as the “carillons” Chardin describes are not at all characteristic of twentieth-century Persian music. In fact, they are essentially unknown.

All in all, there is a certain straight-forwardness about Chardin, in keeping with his background as a “bottom-line” businessman. He is interested in the difference between “the law” and “what actually goes down”—something trade businessmen must know. For example, he recounts a conversation with the prince’s chief steward:

That gentleman confirmed something I had learnt a long time before, that musical instruments were forbidden by Muhammad, and that although their use was universal throughout Persia, it was nevertheless unlawful.<sup>33</sup>

Again, Chardin’s sense of comedy is present, as this conversation took place in a palace filled with instrumental music. The prince’s chief law-enforcement officer won’t enforce Muslim law when it is being broached right before him. Why? His boss likes music!

While Chardin’s account is vastly colorful (and rather a hodge-podge of contempt and respect), it is also usefully informative on sociological matters. The picture he gives of drum music accompanying wrestling matches brings to mind the very common use of music as an adjunct to sport in world culture, from Afghan polo matches to baseball games at Yankee Stadium.

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30. *Ibid.*, 132.

31. *Ibid.*, 132–133.

32. *Ibid.*, 128.

33. *Ibid.*, 130.

When Chardin writes of technical matters, it is clear he is passing on information he does not comprehend. The diagrams he appends from a Persian music theory text, which was a gift to him, and which he presents as so difficult to grasp, are fairly straightforward divisions of the monochord. Meanwhile, an extended metaphor he found in this treatise, declaring that “music is a town that has forty-two neighborhoods, each with thirty-two streets,”<sup>34</sup> seems to point to the basic collection of Persian modal forms, the Radif, with its subsidiary Dastgah/Gusheh constituents, even though the specific numbers do not exactly correspond to any set of such constituents I have seen proposed for contemporary Persian theory.

Again, this provides food for thought for those concerned with non-European musical cultures in an evolutionary context. It is clear: we cannot be fully respectful of any instance of music without caring for its roots, without wanting to see its temporal depth.

### **The Future of Music Education**

The purpose of this essay has been to show, through the insight provided by the principles of Aesthetic Realism, and through a close examination of the texts of these early “ethnomusicologists,” that the teaching of music can take on a new depth and efficiency—and yes, kindness—when music educators make a conscious and sustained study of the pitfalls of contempt.

The more we understand the temptations of contempt, the more we can avoid it ourselves, and thus be in the position to encourage our students to avoid it as well. This essay is premised on the idea that without a clear ethical foundation, music education can never reach its greatest potential. And that foundation needs to be the emotion of good will: the hope to appreciate, and to find authentic value in, what is different from oneself.

As the great Roman playwright Terence said, roughly 2,000 years ago, “I am human; nothing human is alien to me.” These were words of wisdom then; they are still wisdom now.

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34. *Ibid.*, 131.