

# ETHNOMUSICOLOGY



Journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology

ing, fragmenting or "signifyin(g)" on time. In illustrating this point, the author re-reads on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "chronotopes" and Henry Louis Gates's notion of signifyin(g). Potter contends that hip-hop's central chronotope is the turntable, which signifies on its ability to 'turn the tables' on previous black [musical] traditions, making a future out of fragments from the archive of the pasts, turning consumption into production (18). While the author asserts that black cultural forms historically have been subjected to appropriation and commodification by white culture, hip-hop further lends itself to being a kind of spectacle as its predecessors. Hip-hop culture is the ultimate incarnation of this spectacularized cultural exchange (9). However, it is the art of signifyin(g), a language practice predicated on indeterminacy and intertextuality, that forms the basis of African American vernacular theory as incorporated in Potter's thesis on hip-hop. For example, rappers employ signifyin(g) as a form of political resistance and rap music/hip-hop DJs use digital sampling as a means to re-read on past black styles, thus creating music out of "remembered fragments" (7).

*Spectacular Vernaculars* sets out to unravel hip-hop and postmodern politics in five chapters. Chapter One historicizes on hip-hop music through the art of digital sampling. Among the few examples cited include Salt 'N' Pepa's rendition of "Tramp," erected from fragments of Lowell Fulson and Otis Redding/Carla Thomas' versions creating what Potter refers to as a heteroglossaic mix; rappers KRS-One and NWA's translation of Jamaican "rude boy" style to that of the African American urban gangster character via "Nine Millimeter" and "Fuck the Police," respectively; and Public Enemy's sampling of James Brown's rhythmic motif from "Funky Drummer" in their signifyin(g) on the powers-that-be in "Fight the Power."

Chapter Two further examines the hip-hop vernacular as a tool of resistance that not only undermines the status-quo by subverting it, but by "transforming hegemonic utterance" (78). The tactic of resistance is executed when rappers transform yet subvert the master narrative ("language of mastery") with a counter-narrative ("deformation of mastery"), much like Paris and Da Lench Mob featuring Ice Cube create metanarratives on gorilla and guerilla as in the moniker "Black Guerilla" and the rap "Guerillas in the Mist," respectively.

While Chapter Three is more sociologically engaged, examining the problems of authenticity, "homophobic black machismo" (97) male chauvinist postures, and the black male angst—all generating a sense of "moral panic"—Chapter Four discusses how hip-hop culture makes, sustains, and re-invents itself via underground tactics as a means of countering commercial appeal and censorship. Finally, cultural dialectics, ranging from essentialist and constructivist thoughts on race, local and diasporic histories of hip-hop identity, street and academic erudition of hip-hop, to excellent and

poor scholarly works to-date on hip-hop, are critically addressed in Potter's final chapter.

As a whole, *Spectacular Vernaculars* is presented with theoretical fluency without the jargon and density that so often plague postmodern writings. Although it is void of musicological interpretation, Potter's mastery of current cultural theories of the postmodernism and vernacular makes this work most critically engaging. Hence, I highly recommend this text as a valuable source in the understanding of hip-hop culture, politics, and youth culture in general.

Cheryl L. Keyes

University of California, Los Angeles

**Voices in Bali: Energies and Perceptions in Vocal Music and Dance Theater.** Edward Herbst. 1997. Music/Culture series. Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England. xxi, 198 pp., photos, musical examples, text transcriptions and translations, glossary, bibliography, index. Enclosed CD. Cloth, \$45.00; paper, \$19.95.

**Balinese Music in Context: A Sixty-Fifth Birthday Tribute to Hans Oesch.** Danker Schaareman, editor. 1992. Forum Ethnomusicologicum 4. Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag. 353 pp., photos, musical transcriptions, maps, bibliography, index. \$75.00.

The engine of international Baliology, which first revved up nearly 150 years ago, purrs on. Ever-more-numerous and assimilated researchers infiltrate the island's rich culture, reaffirming its Western academic status as the land of the Mead and Geertz legacies—the *de rigeur* anthropological test-case and proving-ground of the century. The recent *Bibliography of Bali, 1920-1990* (Stuart-Fox 1992) has over 8000 entries. In the throes of tourist boom and modernization, and asea in the libraries of print and verbal discourse generated about them, the Balinese have had the benefit (or curse) of profuse and prolonged international scrutiny of their culture. They themselves produce voluminous Indonesian as well as some English-language theses and monographs. The future of their arts at home is shaped in knowing collaboration with foreigners, and they have been active participants in the internationalization of their gamelan, dance, and theater forms.

Bali's fame is *sui generis*, and the sounds of contemporary Balinese gamelan are a special kind of world music icon. Close to a hundred CDs, containing nearly every kind of music ever made on the island (barely larger



than Rhode Island), are in release. Yet oddly, aside from my 1991 introductory text, these are the only English-language books about Bali's music to have appeared since Colin McPhee's prodigious *Music in Bali* of 1966. Granted, McPhee continues to cast a formidable shadow, though time has inexorably passed—his book, now thirty-two years old, was based on pre-war research. But where the works of his mid-century counterparts such as A.M. Jones and Jaap Kunst have inspired abundant subsequent publication and debate about sub-Saharan and Javanese musics, there has been a curious post-McPhee silence about Balinese music. Quality dissertations by Ornstein (1971), Wallis (1979), Andrew Toth, Dibia (1992), and Rai (1996) might have filled the gap, but this was not to be.

For the most part, these new books conspicuously avoid the territory McPhee trod. Eschewing the courtly bronze gamelan genres that lured his composer's imagination, the musical foci here are everywhere else: poetry and vocal music, integration with theater and ritual, and smaller, lesser-known gamelan. In a way this is unfortunate, as the lack of overlap tends to preclude exchange and debate; but it is also beneficial, bringing us steps closer to a portrait of the music-cultural whole. Herbst's book is above all a brooding meditation on aesthetics and the transformative power of artistic practice, while Schaareman's collection of thirteen authors offers more narrowly positivist scholarship. Herbst seeks to engage an audience interested not only in Bali but in a model of reflexive ethnomusicology; Schaareman et al. speak to the world's substantial Balinist community, whose concerns overlap with ethnomusicologists' only in part.

In this regard the Herbst probably has broader and more immediate appeal to readers of this journal. Its unifying theme is *desa-kala-patra* (place-time-context), a conceptual triptych applicable at many levels of thought, from the detailed shaping of a vocal phrase to the aesthetic rendering of gamelan's "confluence of temporal, spatial and spiritual dimensions" (156). Indeed it is so ubiquitous (both in Bali and in the book) that I have had occasion to doubt its actual explanatory power, but Herbst makes a focused lens by training it on specific issues throughout.

A substantial portion of *Voices in Bali* is devoted to exploring Balinese performers' spontaneous creative process in the bread-and-butter genres, *topengtopeng* (masked dance-drama of courtly historical chronicles) and *arja* (sung/danced theater of commoner origin). With maximal training in song, poetics, narrative, and dance, a small pick-up company of players can arrive at a temple festival having been hired to perform and, without rehearsal and scarcely more than the bare bones of a stock plot agreed upon in advance, create an essentially improvised evening of theater. Through *desa-kala-patra* sensitivity, their dialogue and characterizations are at once

artistically sophisticated, faithful to the narrative sources, and directly responsive to local concerns of the hour.

In these artists' practice and pedagogy, Herbst finds the metaphysical-in-the-quotidian. His approach is not to analyze the structure of their art but to "see how it is generated rather than how it is organized" (145). This is a lucid choice that reflects Herbst's sympathy with some of his teachers' values, though I found it necessary to remind myself now and again how structurally analytical Balinese need to be in order simply to learn and transmit their music. As a writer Herbst pays explicit homage to Cage, especially through synchronized changes of tone and typeface. As a thinker questing for the transformative, however, I see him more as a transcendentalist in the 19th century New England lineage. For him, writing about these artists' lives is a part of a search for insight into how study and performance can unlock inner potential, which, in Emersonian fashion, is inherently capable of great spiritual heights.

Herbst recounts his experience learning the songs, texts, genres, stock dances, and simple gamelan pieces used in *topeng* and *arja*. Some significant lacunae of information about these popular storytelling genres are filled here. Among the most musicologically pertinent are ideas about pitch variability in song, and the connections between pitch-choice and affect. The freedom with which Balinese sung melodies dart about in search of an elusive mood or characterization mocks the putative objectivity of Stobocon measurements of pelog and slendro scale systems in gamelan. This sheds important light (along with Richter; see below) on what these "tunings" are when liberated from fixed-pitched percussion. There are also marvelous translations of the poetry (Herbst often generously passes along interpretations by more than one teacher). The musical transcriptions are refined, and the accompanying CD offers excerpts of important music not featured on commercial releases. It is music essential to the island's cultural ecology, but so bound by theatrical and linguistic context as to presumably be of lesser interest for the uninitiated. Read this book to find out what goes into it and why it is worth being attentive to.

Herbst also crystallizes his experience of learning in Bali, evoking places and processes ranging from the ambiance of the family courtyard to the gradual blossoming of kinesthetic musical knowledge into consciousness and skill. We learn the tools of the performers' trade: how they construct a multidisciplinary theater with voice quality, text manipulation, historical and religious knowledge, musical sophistication, physical dexterity, and humor. Teachers' words ring off the page (like those of Chernoff's drumming teacher Ibrahim Abudlai) with gems of philosophical and artistic guidance.<sup>1</sup>

The expository chapters in the middle of the book are framed by ruminations which are clearly the main point of it all. These emanate from a consideration of art-as-process: "The world, cosmos, and our inner worlds are not places or entities," says Herbst's teacher Wayan Diya. "They are ways" (8). One who approaches this book with a taste for delicacies of thought, at times alive and refreshing and at others literally Tantric in their abstraction, will be rewarded. In this regard, Judith Becker's preface and René T.A. Lysloff's afterword, affixed seemingly in apology for the book's hints of neo-counterculture tone, deflect nothing in the way of criticism that the book does not handle perfectly well on its own.

*Voices in Bali* requires being met on its own distinctively experiential terms. In keeping with one of its key points, it is something to be ingested whole rather than dissected. Herbst has not tried to distance himself from his teachers' discourse of spirituality; instead he embraces it as something to live by and comment upon for his readers. This is a commendable and becomingly modest act of loyal commitment, and there is no point in casting aspersions on his diffidence towards more conservative scholarship. I confess to initial wariness of the reverential, bordering-on-the-mystical tone of many passages, but what fortified me was the book's gossamer literary touch and the authorial intelligence it unmasks. My lingering frustration is that Herbst never tempers his depictions of the communality of Balinese arts and society with anything critical, save for a predictable disdain for the outside straw-men of technology, government, and modernization. By leaving his teachers and the "traditional" culture that shaped them (a notion left unquestioned) on their pedestals, he joins a long line of doomsayers blaming whatever is "not" Bali for the "erosion" of what "is." One wonders if the Balinese themselves will ever demand a less idealistic treatment, or if they will remain content to be drawn as the world's most thoroughly cultural creatures.

Schaareman's volume is a diverse compilation of fine material that suffers in places from poor translation, editing, or both. (I shall not dwell on these problems, but they are a hindrance.) It is the latest product of several generations of Balinese music research that began with Ernst Schlager, a Swiss chemist who studied music in Bali shortly after McPhee, and emanates from the ethnographic institute of Basel, Switzerland. The Oesch of the subtitle compiled and published Schlager's research after the latter's death, and over a lifetime stimulated the work of other Balinists including Schaareman, Urs Ramseyer, Karl Richter, Dieter Mack, and Tillman Seebass, all but the last of whom are represented here.

The articles fall into three categories. One of these consists of ethnographies of specific regions, villages, or rituals. David Harnish neatly summarizes the musical genres and practices of Lombok Balinese. Ramseyer describes

the ritual uses and repertory of gamelan selunding in the *aga* ("original" or pre-Hindu) village of Tenganan (much of this material is available in his earlier publications). Kiyoshi Nakamura writes on the close links between composition-type and ritual sequence in Selat village, and Schaareman deals with similar issues in the eastern village of Tatulingga (a pseudonym).

Genre studies form the second category. Adrian Vickers, preeminent historian of Bali, writes on the elusive meters of *kidung* poetry without claiming a definitive solution to the riddles long posed about their structure, but in so doing gives finer-grained descriptions of specific performers' styles than we have had until now. Lisa Gold's piece on the gamelan *gender wayang*, accompaniment to the shadow play, is an exhaustive compilation of useful information about repertory, song, and ritual use. Wayan Dibia, now director of the Balinese Arts Academy, describes *arja* more straightforwardly than Herbst. (The two authors conflict on some factual points such as the syllabification of verse forms [Dibia, in Schaareman, 295; Herbst 39], facts doubtlessly explainable in terms of local variation but not acknowledged as a possibility by either one.) Of the two studies of large bronze gamelan, Nyoman Wenten's on *semar pegulingan* and Mack's on *gong kebyar*, it is the latter that offers the closest musical analysis to be found in the book, helpfully correlated with transcriptions and a recording (Mack 1990).

Three studies on music in contemporary society, much needed for Bali, are also included. Annette Sanger writes on music, dance, and caste/status issues in the villages of Sengguan and Pejeng, offering insight into how the famed collectivity of Balinese music functions in the face of ongoing tensions in the social hierarchy. Martin Ramstedt's chronology of government cultural policy and its effects on musical life is compact and informative; and Raechelle Rubinstein's heartfelt and intricate overview of the shifting fate of *sekaba pepaosan* (clubs devoted to the study and voicing of Indic *kakawin* poetry) gives welcome attention to this culturally significant pastime.

One final article, to me the most creative and fascinating of the lot, is harder to classify, but it is first-rate ethnomusicology. In "Slendro-Pelog and the Conceptualization of Balinese Music: Remarks on the Gambuh Tone System," Richter juxtaposes analysis of the generative cosmology of musical tones from a 19th century court manuscript with careful pitch measurements of modes blown on the deep-voiced bamboo flutes of the ancient and influential gamelan *gambuh*. In so doing, he shows how conceptually and acoustically diverse Balinese tunings and modalities really are. Convincing congruences between the manuscript and the manifest *gambuh* tones suggest further that Balinese slendro and pelog may be homologous. This exciting idea correlates in a general but nonetheless striking way with Herbst's discussion of modality in singing. Branching out further to embrace



Sumarsam's (1995) stress on the vocal origins of Javanese gamelan compositions, we begin to be able to sketch at long last a more integrated understanding of the region's vocal and instrumental musics. Considering Richter, Rubinstein, Vickers, Gold, Dibia, and Herbst together (most of whom are indebted in some way to Wallis 1979) underscores the most concrete shared achievement of these two books: their expansion of our knowledge of Balinese vocal traditions.

Generations after McPhee's landmark explorations, these writers join a teeming interdisciplinary discourse about an island with a robust local culture that is known worldwide. With further contributions and perhaps a shade more critical stance (already achieved by other Balinists), Balinese musicology can cut McPhee's apron strings and come into its own.

Michael Tenzer

University of British Columbia

## Note

1. At first this made me wonder why, when I was in Bali, I got all the impish and laconic teachers, until I remembered Feld's joke about how women and New York Jews depict the Kaluli as "emotional and sensitive," while for Anglo men they are "intense and calculating" (1990:250). Herbst and I are both New York Jews, however, so perhaps the overexposure Balinese receive is a useful bulwark against such crude ethnic stereotyping—on either end of the writer's pen. (To be fair, Herbst portrays his share of tricksters: see the anecdote about Madé Grindem on pp. 63–65.)

## References

- Dibia, Wayan. 1992. "Arja: A Sung Dance-Drama of Bali: A Study of Change and Transformation." Ph.D. thesis: UCLA.
- Feld, Steven. 1990 [1982]. *Sound and Sentiment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mack, Dieter. 1990. *Contemporary Gamelan Music from Bali: The Gamelan Gong Kebyar in Pindaba and Sawan*. An Anthology of Southeast Asian Music: Barenreiter/Musicaphon, BM30 SL 2575 (LP recording).
- McPhee, Colin. 1966. *Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral Music*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Ornstein, Ruby Sue. 1971. "Gamelan Gong Kebyar: The Development of a Balinese Musical Tradition." Ph.D. thesis: UCLA.
- Rai, Wayan. 1996. "Gamelan Semar Pegulingan Saih Pitu." Ph.D. thesis: University of Maryland.
- Sumarsam. 1995. *Gamelan: Historical Interaction and Cultural Development*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stuart-Fox, David. 1992. *Bibliography of Bali: 1920–1990*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- Tenzer, Michael. 1991 (rev. ed. 1998). *Balinese Music*. Berkeley and Singapore: Periplus Editions.
- Wallis, Richard. 1979. "The Voice as a Mode of Cultural Expression in Bali." Ph.D. thesis: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

## Recording Reviews

- Burkina Faso: La Voix des Peuls.** 1997. Produced by Sandrine Loncke. Le Chant du Monde CNR 2741079. One compact disc. Photos, map, notes in French with English translation.
- Aïcha mint Chighaly: Griote de Mauretanie.** 1997. Produced by Pierre Bois. Maison des Cultures du Monde, Paris, Inedit W260078. One compact disc. Photos, text translations, music notations, and notes in French with English translation.
- The Divas from Mali: Kandia Kouyaté, Mah Damba, Sali Sidibé, Oumou Sangaré.** 1997. Edited by Christian Scholze, Jean Trouillet, and Jan Reichow. One compact disc. Westdeutscher Rundfunk, World Network 28.301. Photos, notes in German by Barbara Wrenger, with French and English translations.
- Jali Kunda: Griots of West Africa and Beyond.** 1996. Produced by Foday Musa Suso, Janet Rienstra, and Bill Laswell. One compact disc and 96-page book, boxed. Ellipsis Arts CD 3510. Photos by Daniel Lainé, recordings by Oz Fritz, notes by Robert Palmer, Foday Musa Suso, Amiri Baraka, J. H. Kwabena Nketia, Iris Brooks, and Bill Murphy.
- Desert Blues/Ambiances du Sahara.** 1995. Produced by Jean Trouillet. Westdeutscher Rundfunk, World Network 58.774. Two compact discs and booklet. Photos, notes in German with French and English translations.

Have you ever tried listening to a new recording as if it were a listening quiz, listening without looking at the notes, to see how you did? Item no. 3 on the last recording above stumped me—a gentle solo guitar, a quiet, deep bass voice. The style led me to West Africa, then I recognized some Wolof, but I would never have guessed Youssou N'Dour, the golden tenor of Senegal! This pleasant surprise typifies the listening provided by these recordings—not *all* surprising, certainly, but all pleasant. Or perhaps a better word is "satisfying": If you know the traditions, you will be satisfied with their excellent presentation; if you do not, rest assured that you are getting a good introduction to them. The five recordings range from the strictly traditional to the experimental. Though they represent only the tip