The Influence of Music from Western Cultures in 20th Century

Ethnomusicology, as a field, is assumed to be born at the end of the 19th century. This assumption was based on the idea that non-western and folk traditions, at that time, had similar stability degree and they should be studied mainly in the pure form without the influence of western culture, which was at that time intervening in this society. (Nettl, 1986) The necessity for new researching methods similar to those in western culture Ethnomusicology developed a new branch which was related to synchronic study of material. (Nettl, 1986) This new branch was characterized by the concept that changes were not important. But, in order to preserve pure forms of the culture the new sub discipline gave more priority to the study of changes in the non-western culture and folk traditions. Ethnomusicology in its basic concept could be defined as the comparative study of the music over the world and also the study of music in every culture. (Nettl, 1986)

The innovation of music in nineteenth century was highly marked by a mixture of cultures. The majority of important types of popular music all around the world were structured by elements pertaining to different cultures. (Nettl, 1986) Most of the types previously stated were influenced by western and non western cultures but, through 20th century, this kind of pop music was significantly affected by western culture more than from others. (Nettl, 1986)

It has taken lot of time for Ethnomusicologists to realize the importance of this influence and to start a formal area of study for it. In contrast, western art music didn’t take so long to understand the importance of influences of non-western cultures in Europe; they catalogued to mixed music of non-western cultures as polluted category. (Nettl, 1986) In 1960’s to
1970’s western culture had aggrandize its influence on non-western culture becoming the main one, due to this effect ethnomusicology placed more emphasis on the music changes, intercultural influences and culturally mixed types of music and musical behavior. (Nettl, 1986) Some appropriate approaches has been done and perhaps became the main focus is that one that takes non-western cultures as a point of departure and sees what changes western cultures have developed on it, and simultaneously study what its practitioners have done to keep it up. (Nettl, 1986)

Western missionaries and colonialists never invented any kind of intercultural influence, although they were the first people who spread western music around the world. Some elements are known so far, but some is just suspected due to historical analyses such as confluence of indigenous, Indians, people from the middle east, Japanese music, Persian influence on the music from north of India, etc. (Bose, 1959) In the 20th century, the world became a little laboratory where some culture proposed some types of music and the others started to respond to such stimuli and technology along with ethnomusicologists who were there for recording and documenting for future generations.

Others’ music was influenced by western culture in countless ways. Perhaps, the most fundamental one was the introduction of western harmonies 200 years ago, and the composition of new music versions. (Nettl, 1986) An adjacent feature may also be the increased emphasis on scalar or modal patterns that existed in western repertory. (Nettl, 1986) Also, metric structures—some cultures didn’t have any metric structure for music—were very important in western cultures. Western cultures which used to be set in those cultures where they don’t have any and complex metric pattern simplifications were required in those cultures where the metric structure already existed. (Nettl, 1986) All this procedure was necessary for adapting those kinds of music to the duple and triple of the western music. (Nettl, 1986) Western instruments were introduced in the other’s culture such as the
violin, piano and guitar. Also, some influence involved was the western music making concept, thus we have: harmony, rhythm and control through meters.

However, some of the non-western cultures didn’t practice so much the large ensemble performance as usual in western cultures and tried to replace what with the solo performance. But they still used western notation with little modifications. (Nettl, 1986) Western political and cultural influence was exerted doing with the establishment of national ensembles fusing different tribal and regional styles, specific schools and its teaching of older tradition in western-derived educational context, western business, techniques in how to construct musical instruments, how to market them and the introduction of mass media.

There are three thin strands in early historical research of Western influence.

The first strand, at beginning of the century, a contraction aroused from concept of purity of traditional music and the comprehension of Afro-American music as some sort of acculturation process where an individual acquires culture features when the individual is still infant. (Nettl, 1986) This kind of music is mainly classified way African or Western by Metfessel, Hornbostel, Jacson and Herskovits. Then they concluded, in 1950’s, that “a combination of materials came about from the process of syncretism, a fusion of elements in which those that were developed in both tradition dominated the combined form”

The second strand, this was more important in 1935 through 1950, and studied repertories from North American Indian. This performance, however, came about due to western culture influence. In this part George Herzot among others made some researche of it and expresse an intertribally mixed style coming from southwestern side of the continent all over, and the pan-Indian movement where the singing and dancing plains style, most of the time a little bit so exaggerated, disseminated thoroughly over US, Canada, reaching also some population where Indian people was found, in US. (Nettl, 1986)

The third strand, last movement is related to the study of popular music’s intercultural
fundament. Although, jazz was not considered as popular music, there was some important point of history in research of jazz. This strand, maybe implicitly, guided into two directions: the first, the study of western popular music by very good versed students in the topic, led by Charles Hamm’s work and the annual publications of periodical “Popular music”. And the other guided them to an interest of understanding the modern popular music in non-western countries.

Bruno Nettl said, “In 1960’s, concepts such as syncretism created by Herskovits, Waterman and Merrian, were put together with westernization and modernization, as at the same time, the link between tribal people and high cultures was abandoned in order to set up universal methods and specialized culture-specific approaches.” (Nettl, 1986) Due to the increasing volume of mixed-style music and cultural contexts, Ethnomusicologist got more interested in confluences and mixed styles and tried to move ahead. (Nettl, 1986)

The following table is a summarization of data from many researcher’s publications and illustrates influences from western cultures to those non-western cultures and the way music was changing at that time. (Nettl, 1986)

Table 1. Responses of Non-Western Musics to Western Influences

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abandonment (e.g., Aust. Abo, vestigial retention of didjeridu) Reduction or impoverishment (e.g., Plains Indian only 1 form: or Japanese reduction of repertory)</th>
<th>Nettl (1978)</th>
<th>Kartomi (1981) = virtual abandonment</th>
<th>Shiloah and Cohen (1983) Israel only Fine art Ethnic fine art</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westernization (becoming part of western system by adopting central features of western music)</td>
<td>Diversification (diverse styles in one concert, record, film)</td>
<td>Transculturation (taking clusters of western musical culture)</td>
<td>Popular Pseudoethnic</td>
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Humorous juxtapositions (mariachi Mozart “twinkle twinkle” in India film.)

Pluralistic coexistence of musics (Black off “white” and “western”)

Consolidation (pan-Indian or Peyote style from several Indian traditions)

Transfer of discrete traits (harmonizing but leaving all else)

Syncretism (fusion of compatible elements-Africa)

Exaggeration (non-western char. Stressed; Plains Indian, Arabic Singing styles)

Neotraditional

Modernization (modifying tradition by adapting non central W. features)

Compartmentalization (as in Japan, e.g.)

Artificial Preservation (“national treasures” in Korea and Japan)

Conserved

Reintroduction (Afro-carib. Music Infl. Africa)

Nativistic revival (e.g. Ghost Dance; juju)

Traditional

Virtual rejection Of western music (e.g. India)

An entire amount of information concerning general and theoretical literature related to this chart accompanies the author’s publication. Then, this contributes for a better understanding of this complex event in music’s history.

Westernization means that western influence and important basis are accepted, adapting them to the traditional music. Then, Modernization has some sort of way to keep traditional musical values and styles, in order not to disappear with the use of the western technologies such as electronic amplification and standardization of instruments.

One important aspect readers have to understand is the way they are seeing the world of music, ethnomusicology view is the trend to see the music’s world as one single part of many
series of musics, each of these joining to a specific population with stylistic logic, a repertory and ideas representing musics. (Nettl, 1986)

It is said, Musical culture around the world has been altered and spoiled, and perhaps it has been suggested that trying to save all the stuff is still alright, record as much as it is possible. (Nettl, 1986) One interesting thing is that some students doing research attempt to work with pure music material as they advocate for preservation of old traditions and deal with the introduction of pure western music being art music from Europe. But they also reprove the mix of styles in most of the popular genres, today.

Ethnomusicological procedure is to review artifact, styles, events or concepts and compare or contrast them with its alleged source in order to determine its process such as: syncretism, or artificial preservation, which guided to be developed. (Nettl, 1986) “Westernization” assumes the desire to accept Western values and central aspects of the Western music system, and adapt them to musical traditions. “Modernization” is a way of labeling attempts to maintain traditional musical values and styles, assuring their survival with the use of Western technology such as amplification and standardization of instruments, changes in the intonation of scales, and the adoption of Western contexts for music such as public concerts. (Nettl, 1986)

This concept shows that the study of Western influences has played a major role in research. It has produced a number of approaches to the study of musical change, and that continues to be extensively historical. We have learned that the societies of the world have reacted variously to Western stimuli and used them for different purposes. (Nettl, 1986) However, we have also started to discover patterns and found that these resulted from the special features of musical, cultural, social, political, and demographic relationships between the people concerned.
Works Cited


