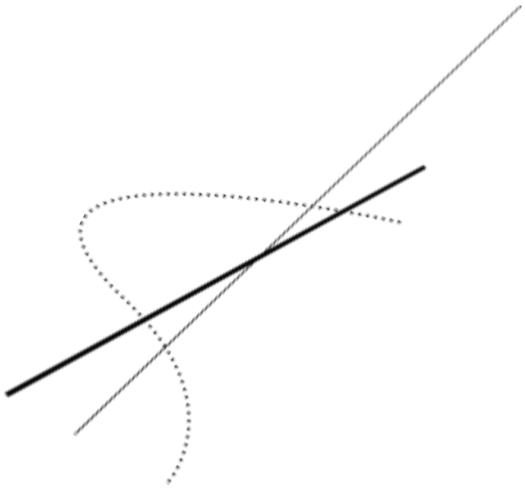

WORDS, MUSIC, UNIVERSITIES, AND CONSERVATORIES: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CHARLES SEEGER AND U.S. (ETHNO)MUSICOLOGY[1]

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the VII SIMPOM on 7 October 2022. I have changed the title and some of the contents because I need to read and think more about some of the issues I spoke about before publishing them. I prefer to deliver a paper three times before I publish it because I have more time to work out my ideas and to benefit from discussions with different audiences. I am grateful for the invitation to present a lecture at the VII SIMPOM, and for the questions asked during the discussion. I began presentation playing a 5-strinfg banjo and singing a few verses from the song "Words, Words, Words" written by my uncle Pete Seeger, reflecting on the ideas of his father (my grandfather) musicologist Charles Seeger. I added verses of my own about professors' lectures and students' papers. At the conclusion of my talk, I picked up the banjo again sang the final verse of the recording on YouTube, which stresses the importance of understanding words, living by them, and changing the world: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Okc_BpSTMs . It certainly needs some changing.

[2] Antropólogo, etnomusicólogo, arquivista audiovisual, produtor musical e músico. É graduado pela Universidade de Harvard e PhD em Antropologia pela Universidade de Chicago. Nascido em uma família extensa de musicólogos e músicos, ele desenvolveu um interesse precoce em como a música fazia parte da vida social e da mudança social. É autor de três livros sobre os povos indígenas Kĩsêdjê/Suyá no Brasil, quatro volumes editados e mais de 130 artigos e capítulos de livros que abordam a música dos povos indígenas, arquivamento audiovisual, propriedade musical, etnomusicologia aplicada, entre outros temas. Lecionou no Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (1975-1982), no Conservatório Brasileiro de Música (1980-1982), na Indiana University (1982-1988) e na UCLA (2000-2013). Atuou como diretor dos Arquivos de Música Tradicional da Universidade de Indiana (1982-1988), curador fundador e diretor da Smithsonian Folkways Recordings (1988-2000) e Distinguished Professor of Ethnomusicology na UCLA (2000-2012). Detém nomeações eméritas da UCLA e da Smithsonian Institution. Foi ex-presidente (1997-1999) e secretário-geral (2001-2005) do ICTM, ex-presidente da Society for Etnomusicology, ex-vice-presidente da Associação Brasileira de Etnomusicologia e Fellow da American Academy of Arts and Science.

1. Introduction

In a world grappling with the enduring influence of colonialism and racism and the terrible social costs of economic inequality, wars, and resulting suffering, it should be no surprise that musicology departments and music conservatories are re-examining their missions and curricula. This self-analysis is further encouraged by statistics that show college graduates with B.A. degrees in music earn the lowest starting salaries of any university major in the United States and changes in musical tastes. This is partly because many kinds of music and musical knowledge have been excluded from musicology departments and institutions of musical training in the United States. I assume this is happening in Brazil, with more concrete results.

I will begin by stating some things I consider to be obvious. First, music and the disciplines that study it have always been changing, even though it is sometimes not obvious. Humans have frequently inflicted suffering one another, and in the past few centuries this has been a constant. Music itself has changed as both a result and part of the shaping of the socio-political life. Musicology in 2022 is not the same as it was in 1885. Ethnomusicology in 2022 is different from U.S. ethnomusicology in 1954 and will change further even if the name stays the same. Second, the study of music has been strongly influenced by social evolutionism, colonialism, and other kinds of power, hegemony, and oppression. Third, the structure of universities and university departments has been deeply affected by the model of increasing specialization. In the words of Davi Kopenawa Yanomami as reported to me by the lawyer Fernanda Kaingáng at the ICTM Study Group meeting in Rio de Janeiro in September 2022, "Whites like to put everything in little boxes, but they don't see the whole." Our universities are important box makers, constantly creating academic units. This has some obvious advantages—astrophysicists can focus on very narrow questions and make profound discoveries and musicologists can write about the original score of a baroque suite with sections named after dances. But specialization has some profound disadvantages, like the arbitrary separation of music, dance, and drama into separate disciplines, departments, academic journals, and performance practices. Yet most theater traditions in the world have music, movement, and speech. Universities keep having to create "interdisciplinary programs" to overcome the rigidity of the disciplines they themselves created. Finally, musicians don't have to get a degree to become great musicians or media workers or to apply their musical skills to change the world or at least its music. Scholars don't have to get degrees in musicology to write about music either. Many PhDs in the USA are granted by departments of American Studies, or area studies. So, what are conservatories, music

schools and music departments good for and how might they maximize the good they can do?

When I refer to departments, conservatories, and schools of music readers should understand that I am creating an ideal type that may not exist. A music department is firmly within a university department structure. A school of music is a semi-autonomous organization within a university, and a conservatory of music is often an independent institution, though in the U.S.A. many have loosely affiliated with a university. Some conservatories have been quite experimental, such as the Brazilian Conservatory of Music in Rio de Janeiro, whose long-time director Cecilia Conde was honored at the VII SIMPOM in a presentation by Adriana Rodrigues, and the Berkelee School of Music in Boston[3].

2. Charles Seeger and Musicology

Imagine that you were starting the first musicology program in Brazil. Where should it be located? How should it be different from how you had been trained? These were the questions composer and musicologist Charles Seeger (1886-1979) asked himself over one hundred years ago when he was hired as the youngest full professor at Berkeley, in California. His proposed department, which only exists as a manuscript, was quite detailed. A department of music would (1) require research—scientific, critical, historical, and systematic—in music theory and practice and comparative musicology, and an experimental laboratory; (2) conferences that would invite prominent musicologists to speak; (3) a library for books, manuscripts, and phonographic archive; (4) publications that would include a yearbook or journal; (5) a museum for musical instruments, printing, trade, and industry; and (6) education for students of all ages from very small children to adults. He was practical as well, calling for the establishment of chairs and fellowships for graduate study (C. Seeger 1913 manuscript, as described in Pescatello 1992: 56-57)[4]. Note that this imagined department did not include the training of musicians or performance of music. That was to be done elsewhere.

[3] I became acquainted with Cecilia Conde and José Maria Neves in the 1970s when they invited me to participate in the creation of a new mestrado in Musicology, Ethnomusicology, and Music Therapy. I supported the multidisciplinary impulse of the program and its combination of theorizing, researching, and applying music for practical ends.

[4] In the early 20th century even the word "musicology" was little known and sounded absurd to some. Quando o Presidente Lowell [Harvard University, 1909–1933] ouviu a palavra "musicologia" pela primeira vez, teria desabafado, "Não! A palavra não exsiste! Seria como falar em vovólogia! (grandmotherology)" (Palisca 1963 cited in Sharif

Charles Seeger thought deeply about the study of music during throughout his lifetime and was instrumental in suggesting changes to it. He provides a *fio condutor* for this paper. I begin with his early thoughts on language and musicology, then to a result of his being cassado for his political views in 1918, then to his support of an applied musicology, then his role in founding the Society for Ethnomusicology and teaching at UCLA. There are some important things about music, musicology, universities, and conservatories to be learned from his personal journey through them. One of these is that change can be slow to come.

Charles Seeger received his B.A. in music from Harvard University in 1908, spent two years studying in Europe, mostly Germany, and was hired as the youngest full professor at the new University of California, in Berkely California (now a campus of the University of California). As a consolation to students reading this, Charles was a very critical student. He and some fellow students thought their composition instructors had a conservative approach and knew nothing about new ideas emerging in Europe. "The students had to educate themselves in more modern approaches to music and were composing for each other" (Sharif 2017:13)[5]. And he later recalled:

> When it came to the history of music, I claimed that no musician needs to bother about music history. History was talking about the music, and the only people who talked about music were the people who either wanted to make fun about it, or else just talk about it because it was fun, or who didn't have any music in them. So, I never took a course in history of music. But I took all the other courses, I think (C. Seeger 1972a:37).

He was only allowed to graduate because his professors thought his composition project was excellent. Dissatisfaction should be the natural condition of students in any curriculum since they should be learning from each other. But they should also reflect on why the curriculum has the structure it does[6].

2017:68). Charles Seeger's course in musicology, begun in 1913, was dropped from the Berkeley music curriculum after his departure in 1919.

[5] It is worth noting the similarity with an observation by another SIMPOM keynote speaker, Dr. Marcos Balter, who described how his compositions are for a group of friends. It is much more interesting to compose or perform for people who can understand what you are trying to do.

[6] When I was a graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Chicago, we all objected to the required comprehensive exam on a long list of books we were required to read and remember. The department abolished the requirement in the heat of the turmoil of 1968. Later, however, the faculty started requiring it again. When I asked why, a professor told me "The students weren't reading the books. They were not getting a broad enough exposure to the field of anthropology, but focusing only on their particular research interest." Sometimes the constraints are external: the ministry of education may require certain courses to receive a certain license or degree.

In addition to his practical plan for a department, Charles was struggling with a distinction he saw between the language of music and the language of speech. In1923, he published "Music in the American University" (C. Seeger 1923), followed shortly after by "On the Principles of Musicology (C. Seeger 1924) He wrote that music language and speech language are fundamentally different, though not impermeable. Since musicology was a speech discipline, he thought it should be located in universities and not conservatories. This was because universities housed the other speech disciplines like history, literature, and anthropology. Conservatories focus on the language of music which has its distinctive features. He thought every musicologist should be familiar with the language of music. What I find most interesting about this is that his decision regarding the location of programs in musicology came not from strategic goals of power, funding, and intellectual favor, but from a theoretical interest in musical and speech languages he returned to repeatedly during his long writing career (evident in his collection of essays: *Readings in Musicology 1935 – 1975* and *Readings in Musicology II 1929-1979*, [C. Seeger 1977; C. Seeger 1994]).

3. "They have their own music!"

Charles was fired from the University of California because of his left-wing political views and strong opposition to the U.S.A. entry into World War I. He was upset and trying to figure out to do with his life and growing family. In 1920 Charles and his first wife, violinist Constance, decided to travel in a trailer equipped with a pull-out stage and give free concerts to bring art music to the "uncultured" rural parts of the country. They found the roads very bad and the money too little to live on. But they spent a few winter months camping and living in a cabin owned by a family named MacDonald in North Carolina. The rest is family folklore. Charles and Constance invited their hosts to a concert of "good" music at their trailer, where they played works of European classical composers. They were invited in turn to the MacDonald home to listen to the extended family perform on banjos, guitars, and other instruments. The MacDonalds and their relatives were a very musical family and excellent musicians. "They have their own music!" he discovered. He realized that they had a musical culture of their own that they valued (Pescatello 1992:82-83). This is, of course, an essential discovery for any classically trained musician and composer. Musical prejudice can be difficult to admit. Today we speak of many musics, with their own specialized musical techniques and values. We don't have to build a special trailer or live in a log cabin in the 21st century. Musical diversity is everywhere on our phones, on our streets, and outside our classrooms. But

we need to be humble, admit our ignorance, and listen carefully to what other musicians perform and have to say about their music. Charles would later do some recordings and analyze field recordings at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

4. Music as a Weapon

Charles and his family returned to New York City where he taught at what later became the Julliard School of Music. In the 1930s, a group of politically engaged composers formed the "Composers Collective" which met in space rented by the U.S. Communist Party. At first their task was to develop guidelines for a "new workers music," revolutionary in form and content. The cultural policy of the Communist Party shifted in the early 1930s and members of the group reacted in different ways to these changes (Fava 2018; Pescatello 1992:109-115). The important point is that contemporary concert-music composers were trying to use their music and musicology for political ends. There were inevitably disagreements, recriminations, and desertions[7]. The group disbanded in 1935. Soon after, Charles found another way to use musicology as a tool for enabling social change—using his musicology to help the country recover from the Great economic depression of the 1930s.

5. Applied musicology: an essential part of musicology

Charles accepted a job in U.S. government programs to reduce the suffering from the economic depression in the 1930s and to give jobs to unemployed artists. This period of his life is described in some detail by his biographer, Ann Pescatello (1992:136-172) and I won't go into details here. The reason I mention it at all is because Charles gave a paper at a conference in 1939 (published in C. Seeger 1944) in which he called for an "applied musicology" to implement large government programs in music. Charles Seeger was apparently one of the first who used the term "applied musicology." In "Music and Government: Field for an Applied Musicology" he suggested that the government might become involved in the arts and wonders whether musicologists

[7] Using a pseudonym, Carl Sands, Charles wrote some influential articles as well as reviews of concerts and books for the Communist Party paper *The Daily Worker* in the 1930s. During these years he also composed some rounds (like "Joy upon this earth to live and see the day/When Rockefeller Senior shall come to me and say/"Comrade, can you spare a dime?") that his descendants sing every time we get together. His highly syncopated song in praise of Lenin ("Lenin, That Guy") composed in 1919 appears never to have been recorded.

would be ready and willing to answer the call to participate in such work. He wrote a strong criticism of a musicology too interested in the past to pay attention to the present:

> Surely the proper guide for large-scale [government] music undertakings must be musicology. The question now must be asked, is musicology ready to undertake the task that awaits it?... [T]he answer must be negative. We have been too busy recovering our past to discover our present. The problem resolves itself into the final questions: (1) Is it possible to convert our present musicological techniques to this new use? and (2) Would a substantial number of musicologists be willing to make the necessary reorientation? (C. Seeger 1944 [delivered in 1939]:14-15)

Charles went on to argue that applied musicology was essential for all musicology:

> Without an applied musicology, the pure study [of music] must of necessity know less well where it stands, where it is going, where its weak links are, what motivation lies behind it, and what ends it serves." (C. Seeger [1939] 1944:17)

I often cite this quotation and have referred to it as "theories forged in the crucible of action" (A. Seeger 2008). When we wonder where musicology stands, is going, and what its weak links are, these may well be clear in applied (ethno)musicology activities like those of Samuel Araujo and his team at UFRJ (Araujo 2021).

Charles was once again ahead of his time. By the 21st century, ethnomusicologists were deeply involved in public-facing projects and musicologists were using the term as well. The applied ethnomusicology sections of the Society for Ethnomusicology and the International Council for Traditional Music are among the largest in those organizations. The two volume *Transforming Ethnomusicology, Political, Social, and Ecological Issues*, edited by Beverley Diamond and Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco (2021) reveals an important transformation in ethnomusicology that C. Seeger had called for over seventy-years before. Brazil probably has a long history of university engagement with public issues, and I would assume that Brazilian musicologists have done so as well. Music therapy and music education are today recognized as being antecedents of applied musicology.

6. The appearance and growth of ethnomusicology

The development of ethnomusicology in the United States can be traced to several events. One was studies of the music of Indigenous North America and African American

music that began in the 19th Century and grew with the invention of recording devices in the 20th. A second was the return of U.S. from World War II who had been exposed to music in the countries they had served in. Some of them applied to universities to study music. A third was that many of the German musicologists working in comparative musicology left Germany for the USA. The expansion of the US university system included a growth in the number of departments of anthropology, music, and musicology. Finally, the establishment of a professional organization gave ethnomusicology a distinct identity. The appearance of two key textbooks in 1964, by Bruno Nettl and Alan Merriam, further solidified its existence.

The idea of creating an organization of ethnomusicologists took root at a meeting of the American Anthropological Association, that Willard Rhodes (a Columbia University professor, performer and opera specialist), Alan Merriam (an anthropologist), and David McAlister (another anthropologist) were attending. All three of them done field research and recordings among U.S. Indigenous peoples. They decided they should found a professional organization. The consulted Charles Seeger, who was attending a musicology meeting not far away, because he had experience establishing organizations and writing by-laws[8]. The four of them organized a meeting to establish the Society for Ethnomusicology.

In his opening address as the first President of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Willard Rhodes described the program for Ethnomusicology in a way reminiscent of Guido Adler's "The Scope, Method, and Aim of Musicology" (Adler 1885). He said Ethnomusicology was building on the important work of the comparative musicologists, but that its object of study would include dance (not mentioned in Adler), and popular music (ignored by most musicologists). At first, many ethnomusicologists were solitary teachers—some in departments of music and others in departments of anthropology. Over time, more and more music departments began to hire ethnomusicologists. This expansion was shaped to an important degree by Mantle Hood at the University of California, Los Angeles.

[8] Charles was decades older than the other men and known to musicologists as one of the founders of the American Musicological Society, the International Musicological Society, and the International Music Council of UNESCO. He was experienced in creating organizations.

7. Mantle Hood's plan for an ethnomusicology center

I have always considered 20th century ethnomusicology to have been a direct challenge to the hegemony of European art music in music departments, even though it too can be criticized for its activities over the decades. Ethnomusicology studies all kinds of music everywhere rather than all European music. Even though many music departments recognized that there was more music in the world than they were including, for many years they were reluctant to hire ethnomusicologists. If they hired them, they did not always grant them permanent appointments. In many music departments in the US there is an enduring struggle between ethnomusicologists and their colleagues over money, policies, and other resources. This situation may have improved in recent years, but most music departments still think they need several historians of European music and one ethnomusicologist to cover the rest of the world[9]. In the 21st century, many music departments extended the subject matter they give courses on to include the history of English-language popular music and the music industry.

A very different model of an ethnomusicology program emerged at the University of California in the 1950s under the leadership of Mantle Hood (1918-2005). Mantle Hood played jazz in regional clubs in his youth. He later moved to Los Angles and wrote fiction and worked as a draftsman in the aeronautics industry. He served in Europe in WWII, then returned to get a BA in music and an MA in music composition from UCLA. After that, he studied Indonesian music under Jaap Kunst in Amsterdam. He wrote his dissertation on a musical feature of Indonesian Gamelan music. Then, after completing his doctorate, he went to Indonesia and did 2 years of field research "in the field" and learned to play the gamelan. When he returned, he decided that every ethnomusicologist should be conversant in at least two musical languages.

As I mentioned above, in 1925 Charles Seeger thought every musicologist should understand the language of music (performance, composition, knowledgeable audience) as well as speech language. Mantle Hood added to this the idea that all ethnomusicologists should have two musical languages—that of their own countries and that of the music they researched. He called this "bi-musicality" (Hood 1959). Great emphasis was placed on musical performance in the department. There was a firm

[9] When I was considering taking courses in music at Harvard University in 1964, Charles told my parents "Don't let him near that department! They will ruin him!" (It was at the time a very conservative Euro-centric department.) Without citing that remark, they encouraged my move to social sciences and folklore.

commitment to learning to perform and performance in both the academic training and the field research at UCLA.

In 1958 Mantle Hood obtained a grant to acquire the UCLA music department's first non-Western instruments, from Indonesia, Thailand, and Japan[10]. This enabled the establishment of non-Western music ensembles within the music department. The first PhD (Elizabeth May) and MA (Robert Garfias) students received their degrees in 1961 and Charles Seeger joined the Institute as a research professor. Hood seemed to have been a little in awe of Seeger and made a great effort to keep him on the faculty in spite of his age. For his part, Seeger wrote some of his most important works at UCLA, perfected a music analysis machine (called the Seeger Melograph), and influenced generations of UCLA students.

In 1960 the Music Department approved a curriculum for graduate ethnomusicology and Hood founded the Institute of Ethnomusicology (Connor 2011). This allowed for a major expansion of the number and quality of a faculty that included many non-Western scholar and musicians. Among the best known were J.H. Kwabena Nketia (Ghana), Harjo Susilo (Indonesia), and Hormoz Farhat (Persia). In 1964 the Institute was offering 12 world music ensembles and had established a "world music festival" featuring its ensembles that continues today. Performance was an essential component of the teaching program at UCLA. To support the program, he added a specialized library and archive of recordings for ethnomusicologists. There was a critical mass of faculty, library resources, archive audiovisual resources, and a publications division that spread the writings of the faculty far beyond UCLA. Charles Seeger anticipated most of these in his 1913 manuscript. No other ethnomusicology program in the USA had these resources. Students who completed their PhDs at UCLA were hired in universities around the country. Often, they created music ensembles there, and among them was an Indonesian gamelan. Like Boas for university Anthropology in the early 20th century, Hood opened the job market for ethnomusicologists. UCLA-trained faculty in turn influenced their own students, who went on to become professors as well.

For Charles Seeger, the UCLA position was a life-changing opportunity. He had no institutional base to support his work or permanent colleagues with whom to talk, or students. At UCLA he had a supportive friend in Mantle Hood, an intellectual interlocutor in Klaus Wachsmann, an adoring group of graduate students to talk with, and access to financial support for his projects. He worked on improving a mechanical music

[10] Most of this description of the history of UCLA program is taken from Ron Connor (2011).

transcriber that would be a means of musical transcription uninfluenced by cultural bias. UCLA in that era was an exciting place to work or study, with strong diversity among its faculty, many of the ensembles taught by performers who had grown up on the musical traditions they taught, and good facilities for study. There were, of course, shortcomings and conflicts that are not relevant for this discussion[11].

8. Conclusion

The reason I have described Charles Seeger's personal experiences and discussed the UCLA experiment in such detail is to show that is possible to experiment with profoundly innovative curricular ideas even in large bureaucratic universities. Innovative programs will be challenged by institutional power structures and outside forces like wealthy donors, labor markets, and educational priorities. Curriculum changes often involve long, heated, debates in frequent meetings. But the effort is essential if music departments, music schools, and conservatories are to create something new in their efforts overcome the implicit colonialist and racist values that have influenced many of them since their founding.

I ended my presentation with the last verse of Pete Seeger's song: "Words, words, words/If my mind could understand them/And if my life pronounced them/Would not this world be changed? We need to begin with values and ideas specific to music, and with music. We need to discuss steps to take with words, but eventually express them in actions in all music institutions. And we should stay true to the nature of musics in all their diversity of sound, meaning, power, and inspiration.

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[11] Though the establishment of a "School of Music" with a gift from Herb Alpert put musicology, ethnomusicology, and performance together under one director (now a dean). The foreseeable results of conflict between performance and analysis, and between a world-focus and a narrower Anglo-European focus have emerged in the third decade of the 21st century.

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