



Futures of Our Music

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Futures of Our Music

Jean-Michel Beaudet

Mis antiguos

Estoy presente aquí

Pero yo quiero ayuda

¿Qué voy a hacer?

Seguir camino

Ahora vamos a bailar

(Weenhayek, 1995)¹

inga momuluꞤ inga momuluꞤ

the inga tree makes pregnant

the inga tree makes pregnant

(Wayãpi, 1977)²

Why speak about prospective? Do we need to think about the future of šour musicō? What could a prospective program in ethnomusicology bring?³

First, it is a way to reaffirm, against many, that Chacobo or Wayãpi music from Amazonia, that Kanak or Papua New Guinea music from Oceania, or Temiar music from Malaysia are still alive, will stay alive and be strong actors of tomorrow's cultural exchanges.

To speak about the future of Amazonian music is, in a way, something new. Till the sixties and the seventies, it was generally said that indigenous cultures were about to disappear, that they were going extinct. Notes, booklets going with published recordings for example, were frequently stressing that these recordings were the last testimony of that musical culture, of a vanishing world.⁴ As said the great anthropologist Gabriel Martínez

1 šMy ancestors / I am here now / But I want some help / What am I going to do? / Keep going our path / Now we shall dance.ō

Weenhayek is the auto denomination (in Bolivia) of the people formerly known as Mataco. They live in the Chaco, in the border zone of Bolivia, Argentina (where they are known today as Wichí) and Paraguay.

2 The Wayãpi are a tupi-guarani people from North-Eastern Amazonia.

Celebrated in a song, the *Inga* trees are much appreciated throughout Amazonia for their sweet fruits. Among the Wayãpi, a decoction from the leaves of one species enhances women's fertility (Grenand/Moretti/Jacquemin 1987, 302).

3 This essay is a rewriting of a conference given at the *International Council for Traditional Music 36th World Conference* (Rio de Janeiro, July 2001).

4 See among many other examples: *Last of the Bororos*, film by Aloha Baker (1931), the notes of the record *Chants Indiens du Venezuela: Séance de Chamanism* (Paris 1954), Métraux 1964. See also Sahlins 1997; Carneiro da Cunha 2009, 259-274.

Jean-Michel Beaudet

86

(comm. pers. 1995): How numerous are the indigenous people that anthropologists, among other, have killed in their writings! This was forecasting. Not accurate, but it was forecasting. Today, these ideas are not so strong. Native people by their very demography, and thanks to their cultural vitality, forced westerners to think in them, to view and hear them no more as past civilizations, but as active people of the future. As we know, making those cultures disappear was linked to a static view of them. Diachronic, historical consideration was lacking: those cultures had no more future than they had a past. But things have changed, and this new landscape might be the first motive of this paper. Without ignoring the actual difficulties led by the ongoing colonization, without forgetting that many repertoires are actually disappearing, I am happy I could walk by these men and women, these

musicians and dancers, these communities, from their announced extinction to the actual impossibility to deny their demographic and cultural force. From a somewhat mechanistic reading of this change, one might say that Wests has gone from a growth and confident period to repeated economical and ideological crises:⁶ The 'No Future' punk slogan appeared around 1980, while some other westerners were turning towards 'traditional societies' as possible answers, which in a way is as fantasized an exit as the space conquest, but with much, much less funding! In the late twentieth century,⁷ Future became merchandise: big companies and even some governments saw in prospective and long range strategy a mean to get short range profit (a well known example is the ecology business). There is very little prospective work within social sciences. Yet, when I began to look at this topic within ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology, I found it huge and multiple. Since I don't want to appear too pretentious in this essay, I will only give here a plain rough sketch and some general ideas about what a prospective perspective in our field could be. With little data and no models, being more programmatic than ethnographic, I will look at what prospective could be for ethnomusicologists and musicians. 'Futures of our music' means here: what will be the futures of the music we are interested in, and, what future is to be made by music?

The mind customs in its relations with the futures

First, I wish to argue for a scientific need for prospective. 'Prospective', 'forecasting', 'possible futures', these fields or objects are most of the time placed out of bounds of scientific research, being limited to social debate, to assessment, to short range administrative or business action. In this classical view, scientific research should deal with knowledge about past and present times, while debates about the future are left to politicians and managers.⁵ Following the Caribbean writer Edouard Glissant (1997), I use the gloss 'West' not as a geographic one, but as a label of a political project (imperialism).

⁶ 'The loss of faith in progress put an end to unqualified optimism about future because it shook the collective sense of control over it. But the sense of control (or its loss) does not apply uniformly to all the futures we visualise' (Wallman 1992, 9).

⁷ But it might not be the unique occurrence in the history of capitalism.

⁸ '[L]es moeurs de l'esp̄rit dans son commerce avec l'avenir' (Jouvenel 1964, 10).

Futures of Our Music

87

(Mermet 2005). '[W]e [anthropologists] are nervous of anything that smacks of prediction' (Wallman 1992, 1). As we well know, prophecy never goes out of fashion; those prophecies for the mass, adorned today with technoscience finery, are based on simplistic credulity. Social science has to stay away from prophecy on one side, and of assessment on the other;⁹ we therefore need to give more time to the future in research work (Mermet 2005).

How does forecasting work? This simple and concrete question opens another scope for us: how do musicians think about their future? What do they think of their future as musicians?

In his paper entitled *When Music Makes History*, Anthony Seeger (1991) argues that 'members of some social groups create their past(s), their present(s), and their vision(s) of the future partly through musical performance'. Seeger insists on constants: 'I believe there

is a strong continuity in Suyá¹⁰ reactions to strangers. [] While the forms change, the social groups and cultural incorporation endure, and it is these that provide the continuity in both Suyá music and Suyá political action' (ibid.). This passage fits well with scientific forecasting in two ways. First Seeger tries to establish the main processes, which is one of the first principles of prospective, here basic continuity in the way Suyá relate with strangers. Second, he links foreseeing with action, which is one of the defining principles of

forecasting, a definition of prospective being a španorama of a system's possible futures, in view to throw light on the consequences of the thinkable action strategies' (Godet 1985, cited in Mermet 2005). This leads to important topics in our work: militant anthropology (Kopenawa/Albert 2010), the ethnomusicologist working explicitly within the cultural strategies of the people who make music. And, music as musical acts (Beaudet 1997), music as making things, as a transformation agent. Thus, replacing šillness' and štherapeutic' by šmusic' and šculture' in Roseman's (1991, 14) statement, we could rephrase it as šSince music concepts and categories are closely linked with cultural strategies and thus are systems of knowledge and action...'

Future and music, two notions, two praxes which are linked in many ways. Temporality conceptions in a given culture may be put to light by the anthropologist while looking whether history is, there, oriented or not: do and if so how do mythical processes speak about origins and ends? Is there a millenarian movement, and if so, what part does music play in it? How many generations are named in the kinship terminology and cited in the genealogies? What are the grammatical time modalities? And so on. But of course, we have to understand the structure of the musical events (cyclic, discursive, developmental, finite, non finite, etc.). Future is embedded in cultural conception-imagination of temporality, while music productions express, create, define and weave those temporalities. For example, Quechua speaking musicians from southern Andes say that šmusic makes time walk, music makes time go' (Martínez 1994). There, time is thought as having a pendulum movement, oscillating between two great seasons, Easter and Carnival. But these temporalities do not come by themselves, by an autonomous metaphysical force; rather, these times are perceptible, musical producers of mountain gods or solar notions. In this complex 9 Boudon 1971 in Decouflé 1976. But prophecy is also to be understood as popular prospective (Vernant 1974; Gallois 2000).

10 The Suyá are an indigenous people living in Central Brazil.

Jean-Michel Beaudet

88

year musical form, Carnival time begins the 1st of November, its music grows and culminates in February-March, and each year, this cyclic future is a large crescendo (ibid.).

Although some scholars working with prospective say that being interested in one's future is universal, we must remember that some people and some cultures ignore or refuse the future. A techno-hardcore photographer recounts: šA frequent comment when trying to take photos was that it was irrelevant to the moment. It hurt (?) people that I was thinking ahead by taking photos for the future' (Petersen 1999). People may have few words to express the šfuture', and yet actively work at its construction. Here is a common figure with a simple example: a Wayãpi master of music (*yemiãya*) making a flute for his son who is still a little boy; or, this same musician saying šI am going to perform this dance so my son can see it'. Among Wayãpi, material goods are not transmitted from generation to another, but symbolic ones are the body of transmission, and such musical acts confirm the patrilineal transmission of the most valued repertoires (Beaudet 1997): my son will know will have this particular symbolic good, this dance will have a titular to show and transmit it. This dance will be alive through my son, my son will live thanks to the dance. This too short example shows that this father is šfuture oriented', that he is musically future oriented.

On the other hand, the future can be instituted, especially through oracle, divination being a mental attitude as well as a social institution (Vernant 1974, 9). Some societies, mainly among the monotheist ones, conceive the future as pre-existing and certain (Jouvenel 1964, 64), while in many religions, future is a part of the unseen. Then, in each specific

case, we should ask ourselves: how the unseen future is institutionalized? Is it a specialist's domain? Is it processed through music? Such is the case for South-American lowlands shamanism. The shaman can roughly be described as a kind of mediator between the visible and the invisible; in this particular case, a link between the present and the future. The shamans I know operate this mediation mainly through sounds. Weenhayek curing sessions, in the darkness of the night, are similar to a radio theater, this sonic system being made of rattling, songs, sucking and blowing.

The future of the music we are interested in

A first look cannot ignore the weight of technique, the growing place of digital sound and on line musical communication and creation. We thus may imagine computer and internet as part of future indigenous organology. Development of organic instruments? The only one I can now recall is the scarab that some papuan musicians force to fly and vibrate in front of their resonating mouth. But we can imagine music translating cellular, molecular or corpuscular movements. The song of the fissiparating paramecia! In fact, the sonic translation of molecular vibrations has already been done, and it appeared that the music of the CH₃-CH₂-OH, the alcohol molecule is quite pleasant. Shall we make music of nanometric dimensions? Such a quantum music would be the fruit of a physics which believed in its objects before seeing them (Haroche 2004). There we see that the epistemic modalities, the forms of belief, which are at the same time the source and the fruit of music making, are not

Futures of Our Music

89

necessarily reinvented each time new technological possibilities occur. New technologies are often recast in existing religious universes, initiating a kind of musical dialectic process between technique and faith. Like telephone among the Yagua of western Amazonia,¹¹ or microphone among the Temiar of peninsular Malaysia, new technologies are integrated into shamanic performances and images.¹² As they have always done, musicians today are crafting the future through the appropriation of foreign techniques and through an indigenous definition of newness (in sharp contrast with the Western world where technical innovations of reproductive, military, etc. seem to always be on the verge of slipping out of control). Emblematic icons of musical appropriation of this kind are for example the sound systems of Jamaica, and, in South America, the song *Pelo telefone*, 'by the phone', which in 1917 signed the birth act of samba (Silva 1975; Sandroni 2001). But, without despising the tools of organology, I am not sure if concentrating on the (musical) instruments will give us a far sight. I am reluctant in giving too much weight to this technoscience component which for a few decades has been above all a component of the dominant ideology (Lyotard 1988). Even though, the relationships between technologies and future can be included within old and cyclic conceptualizations of temporality. The Melanesianist anthropologist Marilyn Strathern in her book *Reproducing the Future. Essays on anthropology, kinship and the new reproductive technologies* says: 'It has become routinely thinkable in the post-industrialism of the late twentieth century or at least presentable in Euro-American media to make play with juxtaposing images of the organic and the inorganic' (Strathern 1992, 2). Now, among most of the indigenous cultures from Oceania and the

Americas, this 'hybrid idea [of] artificial life' (ibid.) already exists, typically through some musical instruments. It is common to find musical instruments which are man-made, reproducible, but none-the-less alleged to have a life of their own.¹³ Some are said to have a special kind of power, others are fed and offered drinks in ritual contexts. Such instruments come from another world, another time, and contribute to the production of otherness. This type of otherness is paradoxically deemed both radical and essential to social reproduction

at the same time. They are incarnations of what Erikson (1986) called 'constitutive alterity'. They are our others, who help us become what we are. Among them, secret aerophones produce sexual polarization, ontological differentiation: within life cycle rituals ó mainly puberty rites ó these secret flutes, trumpets or bullroarers, allow boys and girls to

11 Some yagua shamans give a phone number to each 'spirit' and 'call' them during the curing session. Eventually, they do not answer, and the shaman may call the 'switchboard' to complain for the 'bad conditions of telecommunications' (Chaumeil, comm. pers.).

12 Roseman's (2000) paper, an ethnographic analysis of the way temiar songs are 'transfixing the global in the local' (ibid., 128), is a very interesting proposal for an ethnomusicological contribution to the globalization studies.

13 The Colombian singer Jorge López Palacio recounts his recording experience among the Guarijo: 'After each tune, he [the main musician] makes me rewind the tape and we listen. Then, thoughtful, he approves with his head: 'that's good, she [the tape recorder] does not lie' (López Palacio 1995, 150). Later, this musician went and carried the tape recorder in his arms to be photographed with him (López, comm. pers.). We may take this anecdote as an example of a conception of artificial life and of incorporation of foreign technology in one's reproductive organology.

Jean-Michel Beaudet

90

become warriors and mothers, allow biological-cultural reproductions, open each time a new cyclic future.

Among most of South American lowlands cultures, music can be schematically divided into individual non ritual performances on the one hand and collective ritual performances on the other¹⁴ (Seeger 1987, Beaudet 1997). In many places, individual practice tends to weaken and becomes rare, while collective performing holds strong. Making a general law of this fact could be an example of trend projection. But these two limited forecasts (electronic creation and individual vs. collective music making) belong to a determinist point of view: in this perspective, musical activity and the life of repertoires appear as subjected to economic and social change. I find it more interesting to consider, instead, that music will rather be one of the active agents of change to be, creating as well as reflecting transformations. For instance, the development of culturally synthetic musical forms combining aspects of totally distinct traditions might keep going. We already have Mongolian rap, Indonesian tango; as with popular music from Cuba and Africa, the compositional mixing work appeared before the actual encounter between peoples. Like the parallel economies, some of these creations don't go, for a while, through the show business Romas.

How does music make one's future?

How does music make one's future? How does music speak about future? These two questions ó the future made by music, and the forecasting activity through music ó are not separate, since, as we know, producing images and sonic images of the future is a way to fecundate and shape this future.

By 'Futures of our music', I mean that, following the actual trends in anthropology, this prospective view must be based, should come from the way the people who make music and listen to the music, feel and think about their own future, their musical and cultural future.

Let us begin with music and politics: Oliveira described and demonstrated 'the importance of the *torem* dance in the emerging and ethnic assertion of the Almofoala Tremembé in Ceara (north-eastern Brasil). There, 'in spite of the intense contact situation, the dance remained as the first differentiating element of the Tremembé vis à vis the non indian people of the zone' (Oliveira 1998). This example, among many many others in South America and all over the world, belongs to what could be called a cultural revolution of the late twentieth century. During these decades, many people moved from a cosmology

that tried to integrate the other, to actions which were viewed as projecting one's people, one's culture into the other cosmology (Albert 1993). Then, music is in the front stage of the political arena (Stokes 1994), and South American lowland people name themselves 'Amerindian', weave a political status which is elsewhere denied to them (by neighbours, by the government institutions, etc.), fighting for territory, music being then a prominent weapon. When the Weenhayek of the Chaco were taking part in the local folk festivals,

14 Without taking into account shamanic music.

Futures of Our Music

91

harshly negotiating the fees, it was an outspoken fight against the kind of apartheid that was still going on there during the late-twentieth-century. Kaiapo men from central Brazil dance each time one of their chiefs is going to deliver a speech. In New Caledonia, in 1975, the great show Melanesia 2000 which lasted one week was officially a cultural act celebrating the rebirth of Kanak culture after long decades of apartheid. Today, this event may be interpreted as a political knot, a musical and choreographic root of the independence rebellion which was to burst out nine years later. And, the ethnomusicologist who perhaps went to those places to understand better an unknown rhythmic formula, or macro-regional correlations between seasons and aerophones sonic textures, is invited to go with a political demonstration which may take a day or several years. There, music and dance are a standard flapping in the future wind, a voice which takes the enemy's headdress off, a ground on which stump the political speeches, a root from where sometimes grows a rebellion. And, for those musicians-warriors, nothing seems strange in this joint taken between dance and fight. It is a renewed meaning: music has not always a mellowing influence. As said the great Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 'I prepare a song to wake men up and put children to sleep.'¹⁵

What could be included here is the question of the revivals: all over the three Americas, music and festivals which had been depreciatingly labeled as 'neo indian' productions appear today as offering new, sincere, strong identification, strong musical action and musical emotion. The recent history of the North American *pow-wow* is a typical example of this (see, among others, Browner 2000; Goertzen 2001). One could make the objection that all this is very actual, contemporary political action. But it appears that very often these musical acts (*fest noz* dancing evenings of the Britons, *pow-wow*...) are a construction or a re-construction, that is, they are included in a plan, in a foresight. An interesting example is the contemporary Kanak popular music from Kanaky (New Caledonia): this music is a mixing, a successful 'cultural synthesis' (Kartomi 1981) of ancient kanak forms and of international popular music (reggae, rhythm and blues, etc.). What is interesting here is that the name of this music, 'Kaneka', was given before the music existed: it was officially named in 1985 in the heart of the independence fight in a meeting of a hundred young musicians, meeting whose purpose was to discuss the relationships between old Kanak music and young people's music. The name of the new music was agreed upon by a vote, but the music did not exist yet, it was just a dream, a musician's wish of what the future of his people could be. And Kaneka, as an autonomous musical form, did appear a few years later, and is now popular, widely played, sold and bought. There are festivals devoted to it, and it is an integral part of contemporary Kanak culture. This is foreseeing, musical making of the future.

15 'Eu preparo uma canção / que faça acordar os homens / e adormecer as crianças.' The whole poem *Canção amiga* was sung by Milton Nascimento.

Jean-Michel Beaudet

92

Conclusion

šPossible futures are not ,given÷ to us. On the contrary, they have to be built by our imagination. We must assume a foreteller work that draws these futures as possible descendants of more or less well known present states. The intellectual building of a plausible future is, in the full meaning of the word, a work of art. This is what we call here ,conjectureō (Jouvenel 1964, 31). This quote, by its uncertainty component, may make some scholars nervous. Indeed, Jouvenel stresses the doubt which is inherent in any projection into the unknown, and draws nearer prospective and utopia or šuchroniaō (Renouvier 1976). As we know, utopia is a kind of myth that has been marginalized among western knowledge, mainly for its critique posture toward the present (Decouflé 1976, 36). Whether from the musicologist's point of view or from the wayãpi or weenhayek musician's one, discourses about futures, musical anticipation, are also sounds constructing the present. Let us suggest, as a long range forecast, that playing music will stay for long a deliberate act of intercultural strategy. Songs, words, musical contents of instrumental music, the productions forms, the qualities of a musical event, will help constructing in between sonic images relating people or social groups. And, this musical making of relationships will be for a long time as varied, complex and inventive as it is today (Albert 1993, 350). What will be tomorrow's musical boundaries? What music will play in tomorrow's indigenous politics? How will music help to think contact situations? What will be the forms and contents of musical and choreographic resistance?

These questions show that in this paper I did not offer real forecasting. Rather, I am afraid I stressed a schematic dichotomy between indigenous and western, between local and global. It might be a slide coming from Amazonia where musical synthesis with nonindigenous music seems less active than in the Andes for example (Martínez 1996). But the huge anthropological literature on this field has for more than twenty years concentrated on mixing and creolization processes.¹⁶ And many ethnomusicological studies of musical innovation appear to confirm these preoccupations.¹⁷ In New Caledonia, Kaneka was the invention of a future music, and it appears today as a mixing of šold waysō, as Kanaks say, and šglobal cultureō, as some westerners say. But this mixing is thought of as unique, indigenous. That is what some Kanak elders say to their grand children to fortify them: to remain as Kanak, you cannot anymore avoid acquiring and incorporating some traits of the

¹⁶ šAlong with such a shift goes a reinterpretation of cultural change, that we live in a world simultaneously more diversified and homogenized than before. There is both ,more÷ culture and ,less÷ culture. Indeed, for the anthropologist, the spread of Western culture world-wide can seem like a de-centering process. Local identities are either hypertrophied (cultural pluralism) or atrophied (global culture is no culture)ō (Strathern 1992, 49f.).

šCosmopolitanism has an exaggerated profile in the late-twentieth-century perceptions of cities and cultures. Indeed it may subsume creolization or hybridization as a condition of cultural life. That life is envisaged as a process productive of unforeseen and thus hopeful outcomesō (ibid., 52).

¹⁷ See, among others, Baumann 1991; Baumann 1992; *Cahiers de Musiques traditionnelles* No. 9 and No. 13.

Futures of Our Music

93

dominant culture. šWhat is very generally called the history speeding up, that results from ,the Same÷ arriving to saturation, like water overflowing its vase, has everywhere ,released÷ the demand of/for ,the Diverse÷. This speeding up, carried by political struggles, suddenly made people who yesterday were hidden [Ō] had to spell out their name to the globalized worldō (Glissant 1997, 329).

Following Sahlins (1999) view on culture, we could say that, from periphery šoldõ music, from the center underground Maroons¹⁸, or from the in between suburbs re-used music, these cultural processes, these political strategies define themselves as an indigenization of the future, musical indigenizations of the future.

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- 18 Numerous contemporary urban musical forms are now claiming their own kind of contemporary šethnicityõ. šUrban tribe musicõ is now well known, and often becomes prey to commercial speculation. It is in many ways comparable to the šunderground musicõ of the seventies, which claimed a marginal status while being at the very heart of the system. However, just like for Caribbean people or the Amerindians of North Carolina, these music cultures contribute to the construction of a non-urban ideal, a model of anti-system: travelers for the techno universe, Maroons for the Caribbean, rural Amerindians for the city ones.
- Jean-Michel Beaudet
 94
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 95
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