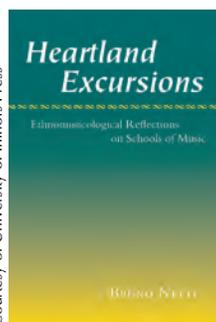


Revisiting the Heartland

Courtesy of University of Illinois Press



In 1995,

Professor Bruno Nettl's book *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music* was published by the University of Illinois Press in its series Music in American Life. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of its publication, *Sonorities* asked Nettl and Laurie Matheson, director of the University of Illinois Press, to each reflect on the book's significance then and now.

Bruno Nettl's *Heartland Excursions* opened a door to questions that have become increasingly central to the field of ethnomusicology in the quarter century since its publication. First, the methodology of considering musical repertoires and practices in the context of the people and societies that produce them has begun to displace, even in historical musicology, a focus exclusively on musical texts and the "great men" who created them. Second, ethnomusicological studies of "non-exotic" or "domestic" musics and cultures, such as African-American music, have established a rightful place in the field and are gaining strength with each passing year. Finally, the re-examination of the canon that Bruno's book prompts is nested in a broad alliance committed to interrogating structures of inequity at the heart of persistent patterns of exclusion. We are proud to have published this visionary book!

—Laurie Matheson, director,
University of Illinois Press

As an ethnomusicologist, having done fieldwork among Native Americans, in Iran and in India, I decided, about 1990, to see what I might find if I tried looking at my own culture, that of midwestern university schools of music (mainly Illinois, but others too), from the same perspective. As a result, in 1995, I published a book, *Heartland Excursions*, interpretive and not data-heavy, in which I tried to explain my impressions (going back to when I came in 1964), pretending to be an outside observer—the "ethnomusicologist from Mars." I came up with four essays, each presenting the school as a kind of society: 1) a society of great composers, each with a distinctive personality, who are a kind of pantheon that rules us; 2) competing societies of students and teachers, artists and scholars, instrumentalists and vocalists, educationists and performers and lots more; 3) a group of musics—classical, "new," "early," non-Western, jazz, and more, who, in concentric circles, also compete, striving for recognition, within the rules of the central classical traditions; 4) our repertoire which, also, we tend to think of as if it were a society.

While he was still director of the School of Music, Jeff Magee kindly asked me, 25 years later, whether I thought this picture had changed.

For one thing, ethnomusicology has changed, and I'm not sure I'd try to write a book in this way today. But to follow Dr. Magee's question very briefly: 1) The society of great composers has very much expanded, and we hear, and sincerely respect, a much larger community of composers who have taken their places alongside the "biggies." 2) We have more groups that compete, adding jazz, non-Western, vernacular ensembles, and more, but I also feel that there is among them more interaction, fusion, and cooperation. More musics are regarded as "normal." 3) Musics on the outside circles have moved towards the center, and jazz, world music, Broadway musicals, some popular genres, and more, are accepted as "normal" music. 4) That chapter about the repertoire as a society? I'm going to have to work on that concept some more. But all together (remember I'm a long-time emeritus and thus an outside observer) I feel that the various components of the school—there are more of them now—continue to compete, often vigorously, but on a more level playing field, and they are also more likely to find ways of interacting.

—Bruno Nettl, professor emeritus of musicology



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Nettl, around the time *Heartland Excursions* was first published