> components with other systems like language or speech. (Fitch 2006: 174)

The idea that music is a 'universal language' is widespread in western societies, but ethnomusicologists have been deeply wary (Campbell 1997; Harwood 1976) and have generally resisted attempts to define universals in music, stressing the need to understand each music system on its own terms, and pointing to the lack of comparable in-depth knowledge about music in many of the world's societies (Nettl 2000). In recent years, prompted in part by an interest in music by evolutionary psychology and in part by a perceived vanishing of traditional musical cultures in response to pressures from the global music industry (Mâche 2000: 475), there has been some renewed willingness by ethnomusicologists to consider questions of universals. The primary stumbling block to this notion is that, although musical behaviours are ubiquitous, they are heterogeneous, and it is very difficult to arrive at a satisfactory definition of 'music'. Ethnomusicologists and musicologists have generally adopted very broad definitions such as 'humanly organized sound' (Blacking 1973). Others have pointed out that the very heterogeneity of musical expression points to its productiveness as a human capacity. Even though it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at a defining list of features of music that occur in all possible instances of it, all known human societies have cultural practices that can be called musical.

Nevertheless, '[w]hat any non-Western culture conceives of and practises as music may have features that do not map onto Western musical practices in any straightforward way' (Cross 2007: 652). For example, in Pitjantjatjara,[1] one of the Western Desert languages of Australia, the word *inma* encompasses not only music, but ceremony, accompanying dance, body painting, and ritual paraphernalia (Barwick 2000; Ellis 1985: 70–71). This is consistent with Cross's suggestion that since 'the concept of music is amalgamated with that of dance in many—perhaps the majority of—cultures' it would be 'parsimonious to treat music and dance as intrinsically related or simply as different manifestations of the same phenomenon' (Cross 2007: 654). Accordingly, much of what I have to say about music inevitably addresses associated movement, although this chapter will not focus on movement and dance dimensions of ethnographic documentation (those interested will find useful discussion and references in Hanna 2001). Even though not all individuals within a society are musical, and humans may not be the only species to exhibit ↳ apparently musical behaviour, 'it seems that humans have an innate drive to make and enjoy music and that they are predisposed to make music with certain features' (McDermott and Hauser 2005).

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One human capacity that underlies the social function of music to facilitate group cohesion is entrainment, 'the coordination in time of one participant's behaviours with those of another' (Cross 2007: 15; see also Clayton, Sager, and Will 2005). Interestingly, entrainment of movement to music is not confined to humans, but is also found in various species of birds and other creatures who engage in vocal mimicry, suggesting that the capacity for vocal mimicry, necessary in humans for language learning, is a prerequisite to musical entrainment (Schachner et al. 2009). Attention to periodicity in the form of a sustained musical pulse and period correction mechanisms are two key traits that appear to be both human-specific and music-specific (Bispham 2006). Neuroscientists have shown that the basal ganglia, a brain structure involved in perceptually 'keeping the beat', are also involved in the coordination of patterned movement (Patel 2006: 101). While the human capacity for entrainment of movement to aural periodicity appears to be automatic, entrainment of movement to visual cues is much less successful (Patel et al. 2005). Other research has suggested that music may facilitate group bonding and mood regulation through physiological effects arising from the release of oxytocin (see Huron 2001).

In a series of papers, Ian Cross has argued that music's underspecification of referential meaning also fosters group cohesion by means of what he terms 'floating intentionality' in the 'numerous social situations in which unambiguous reference in communicative acts is not a desideratum as it may precipitate conflict in attitudes or actions' (Cross 2007: 655).[2] He sees music's 'semantic indeterminacy', together with the 'guarantee of cooperativity' offered by entrainment (in group singing and dancing activities), as