

**East Indian Music in the West Indies: Tan-Singing, Chutney, and the Making of Indo-Caribbean Culture.** Peter Manuel. 2000. Studies in Latin American and Caribbean Music. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. xxiv, 252 pp., map, illustrations, musical examples, glossary, selected song texts, notes, bibliography, discography, index, disc notes and accompanying CD.

Peter Manuel's monograph on Indo-Caribbean musical culture is a welcome addition to the small body of ethnomusicological literature on the Indian diaspora and to the handful of books on East Indian music in the West Indies. It complements *Music of Hindu Trinidad: Songs from the India Diaspora* by Helen Myers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), whose work on Hindu songs in the Caribbean searches for connections with those in the Indian homeland. Manuel focuses on two genres—tan-singing (or local-classical music) and chutney (a local popular form)—that exhibit

few direct links with current music in India and express the distinctiveness of Indo-Caribbean musical culture. Beyond musical description and analysis, Manuel's study is a historical exploration of this diasporic culture and of the dynamic processes of cultural persistence, creation, adaptation, modernization and globalization reflected in these two forms of diasporic musical expression.

As a scholar, researcher and writer, Peter Manuel is well qualified to have carried out this study; he has spent several years researching music in both India and the Caribbean. Manuel's competence as a sitar player is less well known, and his selection for the accompanying CD of two tracks (=6–7) presenting Indo-Guyanese music for which he provided sitar accompaniment is puzzling, given that contemporary Indo-Caribbean tan-singing ensembles no longer include the sitar (38).

The opening three chapters of the book are organized chronologically. The introductory chapter details the indentureship of Indian laborers to Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname between 1838 and 1917 following the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies. Unlike the African slaves, East Indians were free to maintain and express their religious practices, language (Bhojpuri), and cultural traditions when they arrived in the New World. Manuel also discusses patterns of cultural continuity and syncretism evident since 1917, including the gradual decline of social institutions (caste, arranged marriage) and language, the homogenization of Hindu practices, and the creolization of the younger generations. The chapter concludes with a brief but crucial overview of Indo-Caribbean music culture, which provides the reader with an important frame of reference for Manuel's musical and cultural analysis.

In Chapters Two and Three Manuel traces the development of tan-singing from its 19th-century roots in the Bhojpuri-speaking region of North India to its present-day Indo-Caribbean forms and styles. Obvious to those familiar with Hindustani music is the derivation of tan-singing's terminology and genres in North Indian musical traditions: *dhrupad*, *thumri*, *ghazal*, etc. Less well known is the presence of these genres in popular and rural peasant culture of the colonial-era Bhojpuri region, evidence of which Manuel suggests occurred in temple and theatrical contexts. Manuel proposes that these "secondhand versions" of the court-based genres were the ones transmitted to the Caribbean that gradually evolved in their own distinctive manner (21). The lack of factual data—one of the author's primary challenges in reconstructing this historical development—ensures that at least for the time being this hypothesis will remain unconfirmed, nevertheless, the suggestion is entirely plausible.

One of Manuel's strengths in this historical portrait is his clear identification of time periods in which he closely relates musical developments

to the particular sociocultural and political histories of the East Indian immigrants. "The definitive formative period for tan-singing," he writes, accompanied an "awakening of modern ethnic consciousness" from the mid-1930s to 1960s (12), and the heyday of tan-singing occurred amid modern Indo-Caribbean cultural assertion and revival in the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapters Four and Five provide a closer examination of the roles of tradition and innovation in contemporary tan-singing aesthetics, and a "formal analysis of tan-singing" styles and subgenres respectively. The latter Manuel claims "may be overly technical for some readers," but it may also leave South Asianists wishing for more theoretical discussion (xvi). Confounded by several factors including the tan-singers' general unfamiliarity with Hindustani music theory and their flexible use of meter in performance, Manuel presents his musical analyses of the major local-classical subgenres as "a mixture of emic and etic, incorporating some perspectives and concepts of Hindustani music, others idiosyncratic to tan-singing, and my own approaches grounded in the methodologies of Western ethnomusicology and musicology" (124). His comparison of Indo-Caribbean forms with their Indian namesakes, however, relies heavily on his own etic observations and in none of his subgenre discussions does he provide a full analysis of a complete song. Chapter Five would have benefitted from a master index linking the analytical discussions with the compact disk selections and the Hindi song texts in the end matter. A wonderful accompaniment to this text and sound recording nevertheless is Manuel's own video production "Tan-Singing of Trinidad and Guyana: Indo-Caribbean and Local-Classical Music" (2000; available from the author), which includes several song performances by singers discussed in the book.

In Chapter Six Manuel discusses the modern pop form chutney and the hybrid chutney-soca that arose in the 1970s, viewing these as "pre-eminent symbols of both Indo-Caribbean assertion and syncretic interethnic collaboration" (xv). Interestingly, in contrast to the distinctive Indo-Caribbean tan singing, the chutney style with its Hindi lyrics, its Indian folksong themes and its lively dance accompaniment Manuel characterizes as "essentially Bhojpuri folk music," but creolized (180, Manuel, "Chutney and Indo-Trinidadian Cultural Identity," *Popular Music* 17/1: 21-43, 1998). Manuel is at his analytical best in interpreting the entrance of chutney into public culture and its defiance of former social inhibitions in terms of the broader social transformations of the time: creolization, cultural revival, and financial affluence.

Manuel's concluding remarks on music and the dynamics of this diaspora culture are penetrating and insightful. He offers a succinct summary of the ways in which tan-singing and chutney embody the Indo-Caribbean saga; he situates Indo-Caribbean culture in relation to other local and glo-

bal hegemonies (Creole, Western, and Indian cultures), and finally presents an overview of the variety of Indo-Caribbean identities as expressed through musical tastes. Despite its historical gaps and music-analytical shortcomings, Manuel's graphic portrayal of this Indo-Caribbean diasporic musical culture is an engaging and important contribution, and it lays the path for further in-depth studies on this and other Indian diaspora societies and their musical lives.

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