Manuel, Peter. *East Indian Music in the West Indies: Tân-singing, Chutney and the Making of Indo-Caribbean Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2000. xxiii + 252 pp., music exx., notes, index, illustrations, bibliography, discography. ISBN 1-56639-763-4 (paper). $29.95.

This book provides an in-depth survey of Indian-Caribbean tân-singing in Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam, and is accompanied by a useful CD recording. Although the sub-title indicates tân-singing and chutney, only one out of seven chapters focuses on the popular genre, chutney. Manuel clearly places greater value on tân-singing, perhaps because it is a tradition in decline, but also because this music is "closer" to an Indian musical legacy. Tân-singing provides an excellent place from which to explore the theme of preservation and change in diasporic con-

texts, and Manuel's strength in pursuing such an analysis lies in his engagement and familiarity with north Indian musical practices. Tân singing, otherwise known as "local classical" music, has been transmitted by semi-professional musicians since the indentureship period (1838-1917). Manuel explores the development of this local-classical music and notes the problematics of reconstructing the history of tân-singing in the Caribbean, especially during the early indentureship period. He provides a rich analysis of the stylistic features and of the subgenres that make up tân-singing.

This study follows on the heels of Myers's portrait of "Indian" music in a Trinidadian village (Myers 1998). That ethnomusicologists seem to have recently "discovered" Indian-Caribbeans as a diasporic musical community feels rather like waiting for a bus. You wait for ages and then two or three turn up at once. Hitherto, researchers interested in Indian-Caribbean musics have relied heavily on historical, social and political studies, as well as insights provided by the region's finest novelists, to gain an understanding of these musical practices. Local scholars, too, have provided much material for contemplation. In this study, Manuel, for example, has drawn extensively on the historical and analytic material of Narsaloo Ramaya (a Trinidadian musician and scholar). Yet, his debt to Ramaya is perhaps best recognised in the dedication page. The extent to which his own analysis and aesthetic judgements have been shaped by, or accord with, Ramaya will only be evident to readers familiar with Ramaya's writings.

In many ways, this book is a useful complement to Myers's study. While Myers's perception of diaspora is shaped by fieldwork in the Caribbean followed by research in India trying to trace the "origins" of what she found in Trinidad, Manuel's experience and his resulting analysis begins in India. Thus he writes about the creative transformations to be found in Indian-Caribbean musics, essentially employing, nevertheless, the model of Indians as "preservers" of culture. Chapter two begins with a quotation from the Trinidadian musician, Mungal Patasar, "you take a capsule from India, leave it here for a hundred years, and this is what you get" (p.15). This view encapsulates one of Manuel's main interests in studying a "diasporic" music. For him, Indian-Caribbean music, especially tân-singing, offers a window into India's musical past. This is in fact one of the most intriguing aspects of this study. Manuel's comparison of performance practice in the Caribbean and in India is fascinating. He is shown old Indian songbooks which "reveal the existence of an alternative 19th-century North Indian performance tradition, which, however, never made its way into musicological literature or modern canonical practice" (p. 82).

While Manuel's references to North Indian musics are illuminating, one senses that in expecting to find musical practices and conceptions reproduced in the diaspora, Manuel was sometimes at odds with Caribbean musicians. He writes, for example: "in conversations with performers, my attempts to elicit verbal descriptions of this process [the displacement of cadential patterns], or even acknowledgement of its existence, generally resulted in mutual exasperation due to the musicians' inability to articulate or recognize concepts of meter" (p. 131). The performers under observation have to insist on the differences in their approaches to these traditions, reminding the reader, as well as Manuel, that musical practices in the diaspora can be radically transformed even when they appear to be the same. Manuel continues: "Habituated as I was to thinking of North Indian meters as inviolable entities, I was reminded of Humpty-Dumpty telling Alice that his words mean whatever he chooses, because he is the master of them. Similarly, in tân-singing, a vocalist can be the master of the meter, not a slave to it.... Such a conception is quite different from that prevailing in India" (p. 131).

One feature of this book is that there are a number of inaccuracies or misrepresentations that in themselves do not add up to much but taken as a whole are irritating. At the outset of the book, Manuel writes about Indian indentureship to Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam beginning in 1845 (p. xiv). This was the date of the arrival of the first indentured Indians in Trinidad, but in Guyana, the process began earlier, in 1838. He also writes about contributing to a field of studies on "a people otherwise 'without history'" (p. xv). This is confusing with regard to the politics and inter-ethnic dynamics of this area. Indian-Caribbeans have never been seen as "without history" in contrast to, for example, African-Caribbeans. Manuel's claims that the achievements of writers like V. S. Naipaul and David Dabydeen have little connection to the traditional culture that preceded them (p. 13) are baffling at best. Aware of the intense debates that surround the origins of the percussion instrument, the *dhantal*, he writes, "the dantal is widely asserted to be an Indo-Caribbean invention, although my research has revealed it to be an archaic Bhojpuri-region instrument that, for whatever reasons, became ubiquitous in the Caribbean" (p. 110). Manuel simply does not provide enough information on his new discovery to carry this point, given that Caribbean historians and musicians have searched unsuccessfully for evidence of this instrument in India. While he seems to have found the *dhantal* in India, I was surprised to learn that he did not find *roti* (a bread consumed in both Indian and Caribbean contexts) there. The problems in making a throwaway observation on the *dhantal*, are compounded by proceeding to draw a misinformed parallel between tân-singing and *roti*. Following his reference to *dhantal*, chapter four concludes:

> ... tân-singing has become to Hindustani music what Indo-Caribbean cuisine is to mainstream North Indian (Punjabi Mughlai) cooking. Emblematic in this regard is "roti", a sort of curry sandwich wrapped in a light flour pancake.... Although its name is Indian..., it has no particular counterpart in India and is clearly an Indo-Caribbean invention. Like tân-singing, roti is manifestly related to north Indian cuisine, and although it may be less sophisticated in general, it has its own distinctive flavor and validity (p. 110).

The point that musical traditions change in diasporic contexts is unproblematic here. Manuel's implication that tân-singing as a diasporic practice is "less sophisticated" is not. Without such a value judgement I may have happily overlooked his mistakes on *roti* (simply bread and found in India too). But the book is littered with this kind of aesthetic judgement, particularly in the discussion on chutney. This popular genre is described as having "light and insignificant song texts" (p. 176), and the artistic quality as being "generally amateurish" (p. 180).

Manuel's consistent depiction of Indians as subject to exclusion, repression and holding outsider status in the Caribbean is also too rigid. He quotes the former Trinidadian Prime Minister, Eric Williams to support his understanding of the regard in which Indians are held in Caribbean society, but fails to read Williams deeply enough. He thus misses, for example, the significance that Williams placed on the role played by Indian-Caribbeans as landowners in moving towards a postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago (Williams 1964). Indeed, despite discussion on ethnicity and gender issues, the book reveals some naivety about local politics. Tân-singing and chutney in secondary diaspora sites is only mentioned in relation to the United Sates, Canada and the Netherlands. That Manuel doesn't mention the "motherland" of Britain is puzzling given that Europe has been critiqued as providing a geographic referent for India (Chakrabarty 1996) as well as for Caribbeans.

Despite reservations of the kind discussed above, this book is a detailed study of Indian-Caribbean musics. It covers a wide geographic terrain—Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam as

well as noting musical practice in some secondary diasporas. It is the most comprehensive study of tân-singing that I have come across and is a welcome addition to the literature on Indian-Caribbean musics. Diaspora is contestable terrain. While I do not agree wholeheartedly with Manuel's analysis and representation of this particular diaspora, he has written a thought-provoking book. His final observations provide poetic illumination on musics in diaspora: "if fusions like chutney-soca and Indo-Guyanese dub seem epitomes of cultural disorder, they can also be seen as logical strategies of self-positioning in an era of multiple identities and global flows of people and images" (p. 206). The recent emergence of an ethnomusicological literature on Indian-Caribbean musics enables us to compare diverse views on this particular diaspora. Eventually, the availability of multivocal analyses will contribute to enriching our appreciation of Indian-Caribbean musics.

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