Pisani, Michael V. 2005. *Imagining Native America in Music.* New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.

Reviewed by Klisala Harrison

Toward the end of *Imagining Native America in Music*, Michael Pisani recounts a film scene:

> "Pin your eyeballs, son, there's a redskin over that rock yonder!" shouts California Joe to George Armstrong Custer in the 1942 Warner Brothers film *They Died with Their Boots On*. As Custer's wife Libby replies apprehensively with "Indians?" we hear a throbbing tom-tom along with high unison woodwinds playing a short descending chromatic figure, a figure bookended by the interval of an augmented fourth. (292)

Pisani asks what stereotypes of Native Americans are evoked by the moment described, and also how musical codes have been used throughout history to convey such stereotypes. Hollywood Westerns, Pisani explains, combined musical signs for "Indianness" like tom-toms, chromatic figures, and augmented fourths in complex ways that commented on dramatic action. These sonic commentaries negotiated tensions between Native Americans and European settlers involving ethnicity, land tenure, and American nationalism. The music often articulated three problematic stereotypes of Native Americans: the Pocahontas figure (the sentimental and self-sacrificing young woman), the "Noble Anachronism" character (the virtuous Native, doomed to cultural assimilation), and the "Savage Reactionary" (the Indian warrior, resentful of white culture and seeking revenge). Each of these types was associated with specific musical signs for "Indianness."

The musical signifiers for Hollywood Indians have diverse origins in Western art music, popular songs, musical theater, and music ethnography. The rhythmic rigidity of the tom-tom in movie soundtracks, Pisani submits, was unconsciously informed by nineteenth-century music ethnographers. By contrast, drum-like sounds and chromatic figures emerged as tropes for "Indian" culture in early nineteenth-century Euro-American and European songs that had been inspired by Native American cultures. According to Pisani, the augmented fourth evidences a Stravinskian neoclassical influence that Aaron Copland and his contemporaries injected into film scores for Hollywood Westerns of the 1930s. Such scores emphasized seconds, fourths, and lowered sevenths, intervals the neoclassicists had also privileged. Other musical signifiers used in Hollywood Westerns to stereotype Native Americans included minor keys, drones, open fifths, parallel melodic fourths,

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pentatonic modes, rhythmic inflexibility, and the rhythms of the moresca and the "Scottish snap."

Scholars like Philip J. Deloria (2004), Rayna Green (1975), Claudia Gorbman (2000), and Beth Ellen Levy (2002) have critiqued musical representations of Native Americans in twentieth-century US popular culture, but Pisani's study is the first book to extensively document the emergence and development of specific musical tropes that North Americans have come to hear as stereotypically "Indian." Pisani's book is less a critical analysis of the phenomenon of musical exoticism than a carefully crafted survey of how Indianism evolved in Western classical and popular music.

Organized chronologically and covering a wide range of topics, Pisani's book traces the origins and development of the musical tropes for Native Americans in several contexts: European court entertainments from 1550 to 1760; anti-colonial British-American theater and songs from 1710 to 1808; parlor songs, musical theater, and concert works from 1795 to 1860 that addressed colonial conquest; ethnographic representations of Native American music in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; American instrumental character pieces, string quartets, and symphonic works at the turn of the twentieth century; early twentieth-century parlor songs, concert songs, American operas, and Broadway musicals; and Native American music in film, especially in Hollywood Westerns. As this list of contents demonstrates, *Imagining Native America in Music* will appeal to scholars from various academic fields working on a variety of topics and areas. The monograph bridges musicology, performance practice studies, ethnomusicology, history, indigenous studies, theater studies, and film studies. Pisani's research is impressively thorough. His detailed examination of hundreds of scores of art music, antiquated popular music, and musical theater compositions took him to a number of archives including the British Library, the Library of Congress, the American Folklife Center, and the Smithsonian Institution. His book offers evocative sonic descriptions of rarely performed American art music from the turn of the twentieth century, as well as comprehensive repertoire lists and over thirty-two music transcriptions and reprints (though the large number of musical examples and analyses may deter the non-musically trained scholar).

In tracing the development of Indianist musical signs since 1550, Pisani's questions take an interdisciplinary approach: What did non-Native composers know about Native Americans? How were these peoples represented musically? What are the trends of these musical representations and their implications for history, politics, society, and nationhood, particularly in the United States?

Pisani argues that by the early nineteenth century, a sort of lexicon of "Indianist" musical signs had coalesced in Europe and the US. This complex

of musical signs (drones, minor modes, moresca-type rhythms) existed in a different socio-political environment than had the tropes circulating in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France and Britain. (Musical representations of Native Americans in seventeenth-century France had drawn on popular notions of the "savage" (*sauvage*) as pagan, nude, childlike, and yet warlike creatures of an idyllic wilderness, while eighteenth-century British theater and song had reflected the ruthless realities of colonial conquest, ambivalence about an emerging Euro-American identity, and a particular concept of noble savagery that aligned more with Native views than with colonial ideals.) In nineteenth-century constructions of American national identity, musical compositions highlighted Amerindian roles in ways that sometimes romanticized Amerindians, sometimes demonized them, and almost always marginalized them. Pisani points to antecedents of Hollywood Indian stereotypes that were depicted with consistent musical language. Compositions like Henry Bishop's 1823 round, "Yes! 'tis the Indian Drum," represented Native Americans as warlike by using open fourths and fifths, pulsating percussive chords, and minor modes—all set in the British march style. Concert works in the "war dance" genre of 1830s Europe and America denoted the pagan savage with angular melodies, diminished-seventh chords, fast tempos, driving rhythmic accompaniments, and intense chromaticism. The "pagan" trope was developed further in American compositions such as Robert Stoepel's *Hiawatha: A Romantic Symphony* (premiered 1859).

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indianist musical tropes were informed by the research of early ethnographers of Native American music including Theodore Baker, Alice Cunningham Fletcher, Franz Boas, Benjamin Ives Gilman, John Comfort Fillmore, Natalie Curtis, and Frances Densmore. Pisani's fifth chapter, entitled "Ethnographic Encounters," is one of the most historically astute summaries of early Native Americanist music research in recent years. It stands as an excellent resource for ethnomusicology students studying Native American music, because it maps the roots of current trends in scholarship on First Nations. For example, Pisani discusses the philosophies of cultural progress that informed the establishment of ethnology and folklore study (including certain branches of Native American Studies), the techniques of early music fieldwork conducted among Indian tribes, and the position of ethnomusicology within the historiography of musicology overall.

Ethnographers of Native American music, as well as critics and composers, held a variety of opinions as to why and how Native song could be used to create distinctly American art music. Alice Fletcher, John Fillmore, and Natalie Curtis argued that Indian music conveyed the unique American character. This idea was also promoted widely in lecture-recitals on Indian song by musicians like Arthur Farwell. Thus "exotic" song, as documented

in early music ethnography, became the basis for "nationalist" compositions such as Edward MacDowell's Suite No. 2 ("Indian") for orchestra (1895) and the character pieces by Henry Gilbert that accompanied Edward S. Curtis's photographic tribute to Native America at Carnegie Hall (1911). Antonin Dvořák also famously suggested that American composers utilize "Indian themes" to forge an American nationalist style, leading by example with his Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, op. 95 ("From the New World") (1893), the String Quintet in E♭ Major, op. 97 ("The American") (1893), and the Suite for Piano in A, op. 98 (1894).

Early ethnographies of Native American music, according to Pisani, had complex and not always positive implications for musical representations of First Nations. Stereotypes of Indians as primitive, inflexible, and stoic developed as nationalist composers combined the persistent Indianist musical signs from the war dance genre with the rhythmic rigidity commonly found in ethnographic transcriptions (for example, those of John Fillmore in Alice Fletcher's *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, [1893] 1994). In fact, as Pisani observes, this rigidity resulted from scholars' attempts to capture highly fluid rhythmic patterns in Western musical notation. The trope of primitivism touched diverse music genres, including character pieces (Ernest R. Kroeger, *March of the Indian Phantoms*, 1904), cantatas (Hans Busch, *The Four Winds*, 1907), opera (Victor Herbert, *Natoma*, 1911), music for silent films (John Zamecnik, *Indian Attack*, 1914), Wild West shows (Karl King, *The Passing of the Red Man*, ca. 1916), and Broadway musicals (Irving Berlin, *Annie Get Your Gun*, 1946).

One of the most troubling yet fascinating parts of Pisani's book is his documentation of how the various Indianist musical signifiers were transformed during the early twentieth century in popular culture (song, theater, Broadway musicals, and Hollywood films). Pisani correlates the commercial exploitation of Native Americans in the early 1900s with the fact that Native American political influence and social freedom were at their lowest point. Loss of control over traditional territories and forced relocation to reservation lands catalyzed assimilation and erasure, even though US laws forbade interracial marriage in most states. By 1904, the sheet music publishing industry was churning out "Indian" popular songs that used tropes from the 1830s war dance genre, pentatonic-inflected choruses in major modes, and newer musical signifiers of the exotic. Neil Moret's popular song (and two-step) "Silver Heels: Indian Intermezzo" (1905), for example, employed a major tonic chord with an added sixth to harmonize its pentatonic melody. Almost all "Indian" popular song lyrics depicted love relationships and provided urban Americans with a vision of escape from the modern, industrialized city. Usually the lovers were Native, but some lyrics ridiculed miscegenation. Pisani includes Vincent Bryan's lyrics for Ted

Snyder's song "Ogalalla," in which a white man imitates a medicine-show dialect and mocks his lover's irregular English:

> Many moons ago,
> down in Mexico,
> Out upon the Indian reservation,
> Lived a redskin queen,
> she was just eighteen,
> Sweetest girl in all her dusky nation.
> Riding from the north a cowboy came,
> She met him and set his heart aflame,
> Ev'ry night they'd ride
> o'er the prairie wide,
> While to explain his love he tried.
>
> Ogalalla, Ogalalla,
> Heap much lovee, you love me,
> Soon we ride quick my tepee
> Ogalalla, Ogalalla,
> Big chief get sore, and he make much war,
> But we go before,
> If you be my squaw
> My Ogalalla, follow me. (255)

Miscegenation also fueled theater plots like those of William DeMille's *Strongheart* (1905) and Edwin Milton Royle's *The Squaw Man* (1905), which sent the message that marriages between Indians and non-Indians would be fraught with cultural dissonance and irreconcilabilities. Victor Herbert and Joseph Redding's opera *Natoma* (1911) echoed this sentiment.

Early twentieth-century theater and opera about Native Americans also paired difficult Indian and non-Indian love topics with shifting musical representations of the "war dance" and "pagan savage." For instance, a "Dagger Dance" theme in act two of *Natoma* reveals what Pisani calls the "primitive savagism" coiled up within Herbert and Redding's music. The theme features a four-beat rhythm on the tom-tom and a minor-key, tetratonic melody that descends to a cadence before repeating—illustrating that Herbert and Redding were acquainted with war dance tropes as well as with the popular songs and intermezzos of the previous decade. Four- and five-tone descending melodies with repeated phrase endings were common in First Nations songs, which Indians presented at tourist venues and which music ethnographers transcribed. Composers of art music and popular song thus had ample opportunity to appropriate actual indigenous sounds and to reinterpret them in a colonialist frame. In commercially successful Broadway musicals and Hollywood Westerns, the musical signs for Native Americans flooded dramatic narratives and aligned themselves with the

Indian character stereotypes previously mentioned (the Pocahontas figure, the Noble Anachronism, and the Savage Reactionary). Hollywood Westerns joined dramatic action to pastiches of Indianist musical tropes, which not only reinforced old stereotypes, but highlighted twentieth-century ethnic divisions between Natives and non-Natives.

Pisani's *Imagining Native America in Music* is extensively researched, well written, historically enlightened, and enlightening. His arguments are convincing, although the goals of his musicological and cultural analysis remain somewhat unclear until the last two chapters of the book. When this reader reached Pisani's concluding chapters on Broadway musicals and Hollywood Westerns, she realized that the author primarily had intended to discuss the history of those musical representations of Native Americans found in twentieth-century US popular culture. The book's title and early chapters had led her to expect the examination of a broader selection of musical genres and contexts. Still, *Imagining Native America in Music* is a rare and insightful study of the lineage of Native American exoticism in Western music compositions.

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