recent blues music – is limited. Because little has been written about this music, it is interesting to imagine the impact this scholarship might have on prevailing historiographies of the blues. In this respect, Muir leaves his readers to consider the implications of his work. One is left wondering how to situate this work (and this music) in prevailing discourse on the blues.

However, in the end, Muir's *Long Lost Blues* is a work of extraordinary scholarship and a valuable illumination of a largely forgotten corner of American music. No doubt this study will prove to be a helpful resource for those interested in early 20th-century music publishing and phonography, text/music relationships in popular song, and the collision of 'folk' and 'popular' elements that Muir demonstrates is at the heart of the blues tradition. A recent collection of essays on the blues is entitled 'Nobody Knows Where the Blues Come From'. This will likely always be true. However, in *Long Lost Blues*, Peter Muir gives us what until now has been a missing piece of the puzzle.

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***Playing Across a Divide: Israeli–Palestinian Musical Encounters*. By Benjamin Brinner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 360 pp. ISBN 978-0195175813 (hb), 978-0195395945 (pb)**

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Popular Music Studies and related disciplines have given us a myriad of case studies of the ways in which music 'moves' from place to place and how it mobilises individuals and communities. We have many examples of how music, in its ineluctable hybridity, can articulate identities and help form new ones. Perhaps surprisingly though, the potential of music to resolve conflicts and bring competing groups together has not been extensively studied: surprising as the rhetoric of those involved in some music scenes often asserts music's potential as a 'universal language'. I know from my own research that even in the apparently dystopian world of metal, one can find frequent invocations of the global metal scene as a 'brotherhood' (sic).

Benjamin Brinner's book on Palestinian–Israeli musical encounters provides a valuable service in closely interrogating the ways in which music can and cannot facilitate bridge building within a region locked in a seemingly intractable conflict.

Brinner's complex and lengthy analysis upholds the power of music to heal conflict, while at the same time dispelling naive beliefs in how easy it is to do so.

Playing Across A Divide is fundamentally a book about connection. Brinner is not simply interested in how and whether Israeli and Palestinian musicians may have drawn on each others' musical traditions, he is principally concerned with projects that produce collaborations between musicians. Nor does he see the conflict and its musical resolution as a simple matter of reconciling two dichotomous parties; he appreciates differences between Muslim and Christian Palestinians, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrachi Jews, to name just some of the multiplicity of groups that reside in one small, troubled area. It is this diversity that provides the plurality of intersecting musical traditions that offer such rich material for experimentation – provided of course that the social and political barriers between groups can be overcome.

The core of Brinner's fieldwork was conducted in the 1990s. The artists on which Brinner concentrates here began or intensified Israeli–Palestinian collaboration in that decade. The mixed Israeli–Palestinian bands Bustan Abraham and Alei Hazayit developed intriguing musical syncretisms and toured and recorded in Israel and globally. The musician Yair Dalal was instrumental in initiating a host of collaborations both within Israel and with Palestinians and other nationalities.

The 1990s was a period of relative optimism, with the Oslo process holding out the possibility for Israeli–Palestinian reconciliation and the comparative lull in violence allowing for physical meetings between the two peoples. Further, by the 1990s Israel had become globalised and firmly linked into international networks of cultural interchange. The decline in Ashkenazi hegemony within Israel also gave greater visibility to Jewish Middle Eastern music and its tantalising commonalities with the music of the wider Arab world. In this fertile environment, Brinner shows how what he calls the Israeli 'ethnic music scene' developed as a space of collaboration and experimentation and that it has gone on to become an 'art world'. He argues that 'scene implies a relatively loose form of affiliation, diffuse in organization, whereas an art world rests on an extensive support system for the production and distribution of art' (p. 199). While I would contest this distinction – in my own work and that of others, scene is defined to include precisely the kind of 'thick' infrastructure that Brinner sees as characteristic of an art world – it does help to highlight the historical evolution of the scene he is describing.

Terminology aside, the most ground-breaking aspect of *Playing Across A Divide* is Brinner's concentration on social networks. Drawing on social network theory he analyses the complex interconnections between the musicians and institutions that constitute the scene. This methodology represents a major contribution to ethnomusicology and the study of popular music. It shows beyond doubt how crucial personal relationships, in all their variety, are in the creation of new musical forms. While I doubt anyone has ever contested this, music researchers (including myself) have always found it difficult to balance an appreciation of individual artistic agency with a recognition of genres and scenes as formations with their own collective trajectory. Brinner's version of social network theory – which is far livelier and more humanistic than the desiccated quantitative versions of network analysis that I have encountered in the sociological literature – deserves to be taken seriously by other music researchers.

The detailed ethnographic study that forms the basis for Brinner's analysis of Israeli–Palestinian musical encounters grounds an equally rich musicological investigation of particular instances of those interactions. These case studies demonstrate the challenges in finding what is described as the 'elusive' Israeli–Palestinian musical

fusion. Brinner typologises different forms of fusion, showing that the musicians themselves are aware of, even if they cannot always avoid, the dangers of slipping into an easy essentialism, a patronising synthesis, a pastiche disguised as synthesis. A great feature of this book is that readers can judge the 'success' of the collaborations discussed through listening to the audio samples given on the book's associated website.

The Israeli–Palestinian encounters discussed in *Playing Across A Divide* do not provide the 'answer' to the conflict. For one thing, collaboration has become much more difficult following the second intifada that began in 2000 and the subsequent erection of the separation wall and the growth of Israeli checkpoints dividing the Palestinian territories from each other and from Israel. Further, it was always much easier for Israelis to enter into these collaborations and Israeli-initiated projects have always risked patronising tokenism or exoticism disguised as collaboration (although not in the case studies Brinner chose).

Brinner is modest in his conclusions. While he argues that 'These bands provide … a model of how one might live together not only in peace, but also in mutually beneficial harmony' (p. 326), he also emphasises that '… these musicians are starting from the beginning and showing by example the beauty and mutual benefit of placing trust in one another' (ibid.) and that '[trust] takes a very long time to build and next to no time to undermine as the last few years have shown' (ibid.). Perhaps in the post-Oslo era, Palestinian–Israeli musical encounters are less a sign of hope of what will be than a sombre reminder of what might have been.

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***A Language of Song – Journeys in the Musical World of the African Diaspora*. By Samuel Charters. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009. 368 pp. ISBN 978-0822343806**

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In this fluidly written book, researcher/musician/producer Samuel Charters gathers detailed descriptions of his travels in search of music. Considering Charter's lifelong interest in Blues music and his extensive work on the subject, it is no surprise that the journeys narrated in the book focus on African musical traditions and their ramifications throughout the Americas.

It was the search for the roots of Blues music that led the author to Africa in the mid-1970s on a voyage described in the opening chapter of the book. Charters writes that the source of Blues music was to be found somewhere else but his time in Africa made him aware of the continent's complex gathering of cultures, reflected by American musical traditions. It was in Gambia that Charters met the griot singer Alhaji Fabala Kanuteh who performed a song that can be considered a musical landmark of the diaspora, tracing the routes of slavery from Africa to America. The translated lyrics of the song are reproduced in the book (pp. 10–16), revealing historical accuracy and detail. In many senses, the song anticipates the book's structure: each chapter represents a destination point of the great Atlantic crossing imposed on the slaves, portraying the musical traditions originated by the encounter of African and regional cultures all over the American continent.