

EDITORIAL



Music histories on a larger scale are appealing to many of us right now. In the past decade, two major global music history research projects, led by Katherine Schofield and Reinhard Strohm, have received prestigious multi-year grants. Respectively, these are ‘Musical Transitions to European Colonialism in the Eastern Indian Ocean’ (MusTECIO), with a focus on the period c1750–1900, which was funded by the European Research Council (2011–2015), and the Balzan Prize Research Programme in Musicology, ‘Towards a Global Music History’ (2013–2017), which had a broad chronological focus. Several musicological societies have recently formed dedicated global-history study groups, in addition to the Society for Ethnomusicology’s long-standing Historical Ethnomusicology section: the American Musicological Society (AMS) Global Music History Study Group and the AMS Global East Asian Music Research Study Group; the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group on Global History of Music; and the International Musicological Society Study Group ‘Global History of Music’. And ‘global’ approaches to the world’s musical pasts seem to be attracting talented graduate and postdoctoral scholars, which is important for the future of this emerging area. Just one indicator was the large and notably junior turnout at the first meeting of the AMS’s Global Music History Study Group on 31 October 2019 in Boston (“‘Global Music History’: Rethinking Questions of Knowledge and Access’); the enthusiasm that my co-convenors and I sensed was consistent with similar events at the AMS and other conferences.

At the events I have attended, one of the core questions that emerges in discussion is that of what a ‘global’ history of music might be – or, perhaps better, what it might aspire to be. Often such questions reflect the relative unfamiliarity of world-history/global-history approaches in our field. In many cases, though, they seem to carry a sense of the possibility that ‘globalizing’ music history may have a democratizing effect on our fields (a hope that has been especially prominent in conversations with historical musicologists). If ‘global’ historiographies address the significant involvement of past musics and sound art worldwide in larger-scale processes, this does repudiate the premises of European exceptionalism and white supremacy that lurked beneath many nineteenth-century historiographies of music, particularly nationalist ones. If these epistemological changes are paired with changes in participation and framing – changing *who* decides *how* the world’s musical pasts are historicized – then they hold genuine democratizing potential.

These aspirations are among the reasons why I have advocated critical, cross-border approaches in my own work, beginning with a postcolonial study of music in early English and French efforts to colonize North America, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). In the 2010s, I pivoted towards more explicitly decolonial and global approaches to music history, still emphasizing the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the transatlantic world. I liked the fact that these approaches offered more powerful models for how colonial social structures of race and racialized gender affected European music history, even at a distance from the colonies. Without these approaches, for example, it would have been difficult to explain the French habit of Africanist impersonation in ballet and opera before the Revolution, as I set out to do in a 2015 essay, ‘Race, Empire, and Early Music’ (in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia A. Bloechl, Melanie Lowe and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 77–107). More recently, I have drawn on global historical approaches to the body as a ‘contact zone’, in work on Innu-French sonic interactions in seventeenth-century Canada. I am also in the second year of offering an undergraduate course on ‘Global Music History’, which introduces non-majors to music’s involvement in historical processes and changes worldwide. As no textbook currently exists, I am using the feminist textbook by Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Roger B. Beck, Jerry Dávila, Clare Haru Crowston and John P. McKay, *A History*



of *World Societies* (concise, combined volume, eleventh edition (Boston: Bedford/St Martin's, 2018)), in conjunction with music-specific primary sources and media.

In working with postcolonial, decolonial and global perspectives on music history, I have repeatedly found that these critical knowledges of music and sound are only as good as the uses to which they are put. They do not yield inherently better or more equitable music histories, as even a casual look at earlier precedents reminds us. One notorious example is the failed modern experiment of comparative musicology, though readers of this journal may be more cognizant of the Eurocentric 'general' or 'universal' histories of music penned by eighteenth-century men of letters like Charles Burney, John Hawkins and Johann Nikolaus Forkel. Although these men were brilliant and are credited with founding our field, core premises and values of their histories are simply untenable today. These include (to my mind) the very possibility of comprehensive knowledge, the progressive 'perfection' of societies' forms of music and the supposed superiority of European-style musical notation and tonality. Unlike them, though, we have the advantage of hindsight: we know how these tenets were later weaponized in European and settler projects of colonial and racial domination. I think it is fair to say that this history of musicology's weaponization haunts public conversation about 'global' music history now. Sometimes when colleagues and students ask what a 'global' history of music is, their questions are not informational or aspirational so much as sceptical, suggesting an ambivalence or wariness toward projects on this scale.

One recourse is to limit ourselves to local or, at most, regional histories of music, giving priority to the textured, intimate understanding that smaller-scale or even micro-histories can yield. This has been a predominant approach in historical ethnomusicology and in histories of 'world music', as in Philip Bohlman's landmark edited volume *The Cambridge History of World Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Many of its excellent essays focus on the musical pasts of discrete regions, nations or ethnic groups, even when highlighting their historical interconnection. This has the advantage of letting contributors offer richly textured, locally based case studies of music and sound in societies (especially indigenous societies in colonized regions and societies from the Global South) whose historicity has long been neglected or dismissed, including by scholars in historical musicology.

One unfortunate consequence of this 'history of world music' approach, though, is that it tends to address the 'worldly' or 'global' scale mainly through the assemblage of microstudies on diverse areas. While some of the Cambridge volume's essays do address larger-scale processes (especially globalization in the modern era), the volume itself does not aim to offer a synthetic perspective or even more general theoretical observations, as Bohlman notes in his editor's introduction ('Introduction: World Music's Histories', in *The Cambridge History of World Music*, 1–20). This reticence is fair, but it has two potential disadvantages. First, it becomes difficult to understand important changes in a society's music, sound world, listening habits, musical thought, instrumental technologies and so forth, the causes or effects of which extended beyond internal dynamics. Second, sometimes addressing changes that occurred on a larger scale generates theoretical concepts, frameworks or perspectives that would otherwise be obscured.

Of course, it is possible to theorize adroitly from what seems to be the smallest of cases: just think what Clifford Geertz did with a Balinese cock fight (see his chapter 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock Fight' in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412–453). The scale of our music historical objects or cases, then, is hypothetically distinct from the kind of approach we adopt, whether it be empirical, interpretive, analytical or theoretical. Another way of putting this is as a distinction between processes of music history and the approaches we bring to their study. Sebastian Conrad makes this point nicely in his overview of global-history methodologies, in which he differentiates between global history 'as the perspective of historians, and as a scale of the historical process itself' (*What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 11).

Some of the most important changes in how people around the world made music in the eighteenth century – and how music mattered for their lives – stemmed from larger processes like long-distance trade, revolution, diasporic migration and colonial settlement. As eighteenth-century specialists, we are familiar with many of these. Musical cosmopolitanism is just one example, to which we may add the concept of a linguistic



'cosmopolis' developed by Sheldon Pollock (in relation to the Sanskrit-based cultural community from the first century CE). Other instances of a language-based cosmopolis in the modern era include those of Chinese, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Latin and Hebrew, according to world historian Patrick Manning ('Introduction', *Knowledge in Translation: Global Patterns of Scientific Exchange, 1000–1800 C. E.*, ed. Patrick Manning and Abigail Owen (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 8). Other processes that have received attention from music scholars are the Black Atlantic and circum-Caribbean diasporas. One notable case is the history of the banjo, an instrument which captive African migrants and their descendants created by adapting West African technologies and performance to materials indigenous to the Western hemisphere (Laurent Dubois, *The Banjo: America's African Instrument* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016)).

Each of these can be seen as globalizing – if by that we mean not changes leading to globalization in the current-day sense, but to historically specific forms of interconnection or transfer across borders. This suggests that the scale of 'global' music histories in this period is not necessarily worldwide: an important caveat. Instead, we might think of 'the global' more modestly as a way of naming the widest scope of musical actors' lived worlds, where these extended beyond the local. Some lived worlds encompassed large maritime regions traversed by established routes, like the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, while others were defined by enclosed networks such as those in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. David R. M. Irving's work on the Spanish galleon route, which profoundly shaped musical life in early modern Manila and the Philippines (*Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)), is a good example. When working with smaller scales, we might find ideas of transregional or translocal connections more relevant. The latter concept, coined by Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, responds particularly well to empirical conditions in the Global South, where it refers to 'connections beyond the local which are, however, neither necessarily global in scale nor necessarily connected to global moments' ('Introduction. "Translocality": An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies', in *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3).

These and other scales are fundamental to the connected or 'entangled' historiographies that are emerging as core approaches to global music history, building on existing work in world history. As historians of music and sound, though, we confront real differences between the processes that professional world historians normally study and those we encounter. Some of these differences pertain to the ephemeral nature of music and sound, which relies on human memory or material traces in order to endure. (Exchanging songs, for instance, is very different from exchanging material goods – say, iron or barley – or biological pathogens.) Other differences stem from the reality that processes of change and exchange in musical life don't necessarily track those in other areas of human activity. Connective processes like long-distance trade, pandemics or the spread of a shared language like Farsi or Spanish may or may not affect how people make and share music. Creative activity involves symbolic and aesthetic processes that can be more – or less – removed from other contemporary realities.

It is interesting that specialists in music of the eighteenth century (and the early modern period, more generally) have been so prominent in developing global approaches to music history. Both Schofield and Strohm specialize in music before 1800 (extending slightly later in Schofield's case); prior to their projects, work by Robert Stevenson, Gary Tomlinson, Geoffrey Baker, David R. M. Irving, Tess Knighton and me on early European colonization was a matrix for globally oriented music historiographies. More recently, we have seen a florescence of research on East Asia (especially by Zhuqing (Lester) Hu, Thomas Irvine and Makoto Harris Takao) and the Western hemisphere (for example by Sarah Eyerly, Glenda Goodman, Bonnie Gordon and Julia Prest).

Given the haunted legacy of music histories on a larger scale, what is it that makes such research appealing now to some of us who work in and around this period? Martin Stokes put it this way, in his introduction to Strohm's recent edited volume: 'who would *want* a global music history, and why?' ('Notes and Queries on "Global Music History"', in *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project, 2013–2015*, ed.



Reinhard Strohm (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 3). One reason may be the influence of compelling interdisciplinary work that has been formative for at least two decades. For example, those familiar with the interdisciplinary literature will have encountered research on the ‘global eighteenth century’, a phrase that forms the title of a particularly influential 2003 volume edited by Felicity Nussbaum (*The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005)). For me, the decolonial writings of early modernist Walter Dignolo (*The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, second edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); and *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)) – themselves developing Aníbal Quijano’s foundational work on the ‘colonialidad del poder’ (Aníbal Quijano, trans. Michael Ennis, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America’, *Nepantla: Views from South* 1/3 (2000), 533–580) – have been especially galvanizing. They represent an enticing combination of historical astuteness and critical accountability to those who face colonialism’s legacies and ongoing realities.

Finally, I would note that the work coming out of this emerging area of research has begun to shift the goalposts on what erudition means, especially for Anglophone scholars and teachers. Language facility is a major example. The documentary aspect of global music history research requires a multilingual capacity extending well beyond the usual European languages. This is an especially impressive part of the research Schofield’s team conducted, for which the relevant multilingual archives required reading knowledge of historical Hindi, Persian, Urdu and Malay, as well as the languages used by European nations in constructing colonialist and imperial projects. Clearly, collaboration will be an important strategy for working successfully across world language competencies, as Eyerly did in her collaborative project (with Rachel Wheeler) on Mohican Moravian hymns. Changing norms for advanced musicological study would also help: for example, by expanding the range of languages fulfilling requirements for graduate study (at least in the USA and Canada) beyond the standard European ones.

There is a growing mountain of evidence that interconnection across borders mattered, in some cases fundamentally, for the European and Euro-settler music histories that have been the bread and butter of our field. If we want to equip our students (or ourselves) to address these and, I do hope, other music histories, it will involve shifting the scale of our awareness and knowledge bases beyond what feels like ‘home’. That is no small work, but the worlds of eighteenth-century music, sound art and musical reflection in many cases demand it.

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