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EDITED BY DANIEL BAROLSKY  
AND LOUIS EPSTEIN

Volume

2



# Open Access Musicology

VOLUME TWO

Edited by

Louis Epstein and Daniel Barolsky



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12714424>

Print ISBN: 978-1-64315-049-9

Open access ISBN: 978-1-64315-050-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020564054

Published in the United States of America by Lever Press, in partnership with Michigan Publishing.

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## *Preface*

At the liberal arts colleges where we teach, we are lucky to work with students who are musical omnivores: they devour classical music and K-pop, bluegrass and hip-hop, heavy metal and reggae. They've never lived in a world where it was acceptable to dismiss new or unfamiliar music as "not music," as some once dismissed jazz and hip-hop. We are lucky to work with students like ours because their musical appetites inform our teaching. It is not enough to teach them the same way we were taught; instead, we explore new-to-us music and pedagogy as we learn from our own students' constantly changing interests, their catholic tastes, and their fresh perspectives on the music that our grad school seminars never acknowledged. Inspired by recent trends in music history pedagogy but also by the students we serve, we've helped rewrite our departments' curricula to break down traditional boundaries within music studies. Classical music is no longer the unmarked object of inquiry in higher education music schools and departments, but rather one repertory among many that we find ourselves addressing. Just as importantly, in departments across the country, new scholarship increasingly blurs lines between

history, theory, ethnography, sound studies, and performance. Our curricula and the readings we assign should reflect a similarly omnivorous, cross-disciplinary approach to the study of music.

We launched *Open Access Musicology* (OAM) to provide students, scholars, and the general public with accessible scholarship that reflects our commitment to the omnivorous ways of thinking we so admire in our students and, increasingly, in our curricula. OAM essays embrace complexity, asking difficult questions that don't always yield easy answers. They make convincing arguments in a transparent way, which means we can use them to model good writing. They draw on a diverse variety of sources and methodologies, which means our students learn to do musicology from scholars working on the cutting edge of the field. And they bridge disciplinary as well as geographical boundaries, which means that students encounter the vastness of the musical world, not to mention the vast array of approaches to understanding it. In short, we created OAM to create a fund of teaching materials for our own classrooms and, we hope, for many others.

In this, our sophomore volume of OAM, we worked with five new authors and one returning contributor from Volume 1 to offer readers multiple paths through rich material. Gurminder Bhogal's essay, for instance, critiques traditional approaches to "structure" and "ornament" in Beethoven symphonies, early twentieth-century French music, and North Indian classical performance practice. Ornamentation, she argues, is hardly mere filigree, and to think of "levels" of music from the surface to an imagined core exposes some music analysis as invested in racial hierarchies. From this argument a reader could easily connect to Daniel Barolsky's discussion of the racialized aesthetics embedded in the criticism of performance or to Rebecca Cypess's study of women in 18<sup>th</sup>-century musical salons, where the powerful agency of these influential figures has long been written out of history. Cypess's attention to how different histories have been written connects to the historiographic issues raised by Eduardo Herrera, who explores

both the institutional successes and failures to decolonize classical music in Latin America. One might also put Bhogal's consideration of alternative pedagogies in conversation with Megan Kaes Long's essay on model theory, or with the essay by Jennifer Fraser and Gabriela Linares on the benefits of digital-mapping the results of ethnographic research.

The second volume of *Open Access Musicology* also continues to push at disciplinary boundaries that for so long have restricted the methods and questions used in the studies of music and sound. Many of our essays in both volumes (Bakkum, Chybowski, and Dorf in Volume 1; Barolsky, Bhogal, and Cypess in Volume 2) introduce performers into historical narratives that previously centered composers, pushing readers to raise new questions about embodiment, representation, and recreation. Others (Bakkum, Cypess, and Williams in Volume 1; Herrera in Volume 2) cluster around the impact of material origins of sound and music through instruments, recording technologies, and patronage. Our authors present close readings of events or spaces (Chybowski, Dorf, and Fraser/Linares) or scores (Bhogal, Blim, Granade, and Long). Almost all of them—but especially the essays in this Volume by Bhogal and Herrera—draw attention to politics around the creation of knowledge. These authors demonstrate that the study of music and sound builds on historical paths and traditions, for better or for worse. As the autobiographical introductions to each essay make clear, the study of music always reflects the priorities of individual authors who have unique perspectives and experiences.

In choosing your own path through this volume, we hope you'll reflect on the many ways in which *Open Access Musicology* is truly accessible. The essays are written with a wide range of readers in mind; digital access to the volume is free of charge, thanks to the generosity of the institutions that fund Lever Press; and the essays in this collection are open to different uses. But just as with any form of cultural (or culinary) omnivory, we acknowledge that our choice of ingredients and dishes remains limited. *Open Access Musicology*

will never pretend to present complete histories, cover all elements of a subject, or satisfy the agenda of every reader. Rather, each essay provides an opening to further contemplation and study. We invite you to follow the thematic links between essays, pursue notes or other online resources provided by authors, or simply repurpose the essay's questions into new and exciting forms of research and creativity. These essays have already provided rich learning opportunities for our students and their teachers. We're thrilled to be able to share them with you.

– Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein

## *Acknowledgments*

*Open Access Musicology* is largely a labor of love. The authors, editors, and publishers do not profit from this work although many of us are privileged to have institutional support for our time and effort. We wish to express our profound gratitude for the work and patience of our authors, our editorial board, and to all those who reviewed the essays in this collection. We would also like to thank the board of Lever Press for endorsing such a peculiar thing as OAM, and the Lever editors, copyeditors, typesetters, and backend technology specialists who support our work. We are also eternally thankful for the dozens of faculty and students who have reviewed, read, taught, and learned from our essays. We challenge all our authors to write with purpose and to remain relevant. Your responses give us hope that these essays may continue to enact positive change in the future.

Daniel Barolsky, Editor

Louis Epstein, Editor

May 2022





# LATIN AMERICA AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF CLASSICAL MUSIC

By Eduardo Herrera

*The essay you are about to read originated from a moment of self-reflection I had around 2004, when I was a master's student at the University of Illinois. I had read a provocative essay by Uruguayan composer Coriún Aharonián titled "Aspects of Latin American Identity after Five Centuries of Conquest, Domination, and Miscegenation."<sup>1</sup> In this text, Aharonián states that art music composers in Latin America are "neutralized in an institutional cage."<sup>2</sup> Part of the argument he makes revolves around music education at the university level and what he sees as its "Europeanizing" goals. His words resonated with my experience as an undergraduate student in Western art music history in Bogotá, Colombia during the late 1990s. I was frustrated by how little Latin American music we had studied as part of the curriculum and how the peoples and stories I was expected to know about as a properly trained music historian were almost without exception from Europe and the United States. Were there no composers or compositions that we could study emerging from Latin America after more than 500 years*

*of the devastating arrival of Europeans and the colonial imposition of many of their cultural practices?*

*That was the beginning of my desire to understand the ways that Latin America's colonial legacy had continued to shape aspects of art education. Why was our education so committed to reinforcing European and US American models? What were the theoretical frames that would allow me to understand how this process took place and possible ways to move beyond it? Was it possible for instances of classical music (a tradition deeply entangled with colonialism) to serve as a vehicle of decolonization?*

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In this essay I want to share with you three connected stories about classical music and decolonization that took place in Latin America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These stories demonstrate some complications, failures, and successes that emerged with efforts to decolonize classical music. But before we do that, let us take apart some of the terms I have just used.

Let us start with “classical music.” I am talking here about the musical tradition sometimes called Western art music, concert music, academic music, or even highbrow music. At its most general, people that participate in the Western classical music tradition understand it as a practice related (whether as a continuity or as a break) to a past that includes the music of composers like Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johannes Brahms, Igor Stravinsky, John Cage, and many others. The main aspect here is the belief in this as a tradition with a long history, one that has been associated mainly with Europe and more recently, with North America.

Then there is “Latin America,” which is, of course, not a homogeneous region or even a definite geographical area with clear borders. We can take as common denominator what John Chasteen has called being “born in blood and fire”—that is, the shared experience of savage conquest and colonization under

the Spanish and Portuguese empires. But even then, there are significant differences between areas that were exploited for silver or gold and areas focused on the cultivation of tobacco, sugar, coffee, or bananas. There are differences between places in which the workforces were mostly enslaved populations brought from Sub-Saharan Africa and places in which workforces consisted of members of multiple Indigenous groups including Aztecs, Chibchas, Caribs, Taínos, Tupí-Guaraní, Incas, and others.<sup>3</sup> The very name Latin America defines the region in relation to Europe and its Romance languages. And if we were to focus on the historical relationship with Spain and Portugal, then we leave out territories in Central and South America and especially the Caribbean that were colonized by British, French, or Dutch forces with different strategies from the Catholic Iberian empires. Still, for the purposes of this essay, the common denominator will be that the people described in Latin American histories not only identify with but often actively argue for the historical importance of being “Latin American.”

Finally, and most importantly, there is the concept of “decolonization.” As a working definition for this essay, I use decolonization to refer to the ongoing project and practice of revealing and dismantling political, economic, social, but most importantly, mental structures that reproduce and sustain the hierarchies and imbalances left as a legacy of colonialism.<sup>4</sup> You as a reader might be surprised to find that I often frame the three examples in this essay around the ways they failed. In fact—and I am tipping my hand early—I see decolonization as a project that necessarily has to frequently fail in the sense that it cannot simply erase a colonial past or cleanly remove its legacies. But these are productive and worthy failures that are at the very center of the project. I will begin with a brief personal story that reveals how I encountered coloniality firsthand and how I came to understand this concept in the Latin American environment. Then I will share the stories of the *Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales* (CLAEM), the *Cursos*

*Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* (CLAMC), and the *Orquesta Experimental de Instrumentos Nativos* (OEIN).

## COLONIAL MENTALITIES AND THEIR ROOTS

Back in the late 1990s in Bogotá, Colombia, I was an undergraduate student in a very demanding music program. I was fascinated by classical music history courses and eventually changed my major from guitar performance to the recently created music history major. This meant I read a lot, attended as many live performances as I could, and, even more, listened to recordings of works I was reading about. I devoured as much classical music as I could, trying to learn its trajectories, histories, contradictions, and highlights. However, I soon realized that in all my readings and listening experiences, I very rarely encountered music made in Latin America. And I was not alone. With very few exceptions, the books, works, and examples teachers used to educate my cohort and me did not involve composers from Latin America either. Checking my notebooks today, I realize we only had one session in all four semesters of the classical music history survey in which we talked about Latin American music. That day we covered the music of Carlos Chávez from México, Heitor Villa-Lobos from Brazil, and Alberto Ginastera from Argentina. The content of our courses made Latin America appear as a footnote within the history of classical music; it felt as if Latin America had not been a part of this musical tradition, or at least not an important one, even though it had been part of the Western tradition in one way or another for five centuries.

Over the years, I've learned that my education was not unique compared to those of other Latin American colleagues. We were all, for the most part, much more aware of recent and not-so-recent classical musical practices in Central and Western Europe and in the United States than those happening at home or in neighboring countries. I found myself playing, studying, and listening to music that was mostly created in the distant past and mostly in Europe.

The exceptions often arose through my interest in classical guitar, one of the few areas in which works by Latin American composers circulated widely. Perhaps the marginality of the guitar in the classical tradition allowed this different geographical focus. However, with complete certainty, I know that we never looked at guitar works in music theory, analysis, or history courses. Why was Latin America so blatantly absent?

At the root of this absence is coloniality, the legacy of colonialism that permeates large aspects of American societies since the devastating encounter between Europeans and the Indigenous people of the so-called “New World” in the year 1492. Many of the things we take for granted—the commonsensical, the natural, the unquestioned—are often rooted in invisible systems of power that sustain colonialism and its logics. The processes of conquest and colonization encompass colonizers’ settlement on land taken from native populations and the imposition of mostly Western European Catholic cultural practices on those native populations—all under a genocidal might, of course.<sup>5</sup> Both free natives and enslaved populations—local and those brought from Africa—were forced into new religious practices, worldviews, social stratifications, economic organization, and musical practices. The colonial encounter eliminated entire groups of peoples through violence and disease, and while this process did not result in the complete disappearance of every Indigenous or African practice, it did achieve at least two things: first, it established Western European cultural practices as superior (the word “civilized” was often used to indicate this) in a hierarchical organization that helped form and sustain the racialized exploitation of Black and Indigenous peoples; and second, it forcibly changed the practices of both colonizers and the colonized. Scholars have used different terms to think about these changes, such as assimilation, syncretism, transculturation, acculturation, and hybridity.<sup>6</sup>

The territories of what became known as the Americas became colonial extensions of the European empires—Spain, Portugal,

England, and France. To maintain this geopolitical order, certain colonial strategies were put into place. The entire educational system—schools and universities, but also the Church—became Europeanizing institutions, prohibiting and often punishing the practice of local or African-derived traditions. Racial, ethnic, and gender conventions were naturalized to sustain the growing inequality and to maintain a patriarchal, heteronormative, Eurocentric dominance. The invading settlers established a resource-based economy focused on the extraction of raw materials, forcing the colonies to access manufactured products primarily through trade with imperial forces. The colonial territories were divided up, and new borders were traced, breaking apart preexisting groupings. Finally, the circulation of information and technologies privileged empire-to-colony dynamics and purposefully hindered colony-to-colony exchanges, effectively isolating neighboring colonies from one another.

Coloniality was embedded in musical and other cultural practices. For centuries, cultural gatekeepers disseminated the idea that European culture, or at least practices from certain parts of Europe, were the most valuable and “civilized.” Elites and aspiring elites embraced practices emanating from Europe because they would legitimize their elite status in the first place. And in what we call the classical music tradition, such European music of composers as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Johannes Brahms became the model deemed superior to anything new or made elsewhere. Even though the independence movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed colonies to break away from Europe, the legacy of colonization in the Americas remains evident today in the countless habits of thinking, of using and creating categories, and of understanding the world in ways that align with European ideas and that assign supreme value to European cultural practices of the past. Can these legacies be challenged? Can music provide alternative ontologies (what is a composition? what is a performance? what

is a work of art?) or epistemologies (how do we compose music? how do we learn about aesthetics? what can we gain from music?) that contribute toward projects of decolonization?

For this reading, I want to share with you three case studies that speak to my search for a response to coloniality from within classical music: the *Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales* (CLAEM, Latin American Center for Advanced Musical Studies), the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* (CLAMC, Latin American Courses of Contemporary Music), and the *Orquesta Experimental de Instrumentos Nativos* (OEIN, Experimental Native Instruments Orchestra). Even with their drawbacks, these three cases represent an important way that musical experimentation has played and can play a part in the decolonization of the classical music world.

## CASE STUDY 1: CLAEM

In learning about Latin American musicians engaged with the classical music tradition I encountered four composers whose work really fascinated me: Gerardo Gandini (Argentina, 1936–2013), Graciela Paraskevaïdis (Argentina/Uruguay, 1940–2017), Coriún Aharonián (Uruguay, 1940–2017), and Mariano Etkin (Argentina, 1943–2016). As examples of each of their work, check out Gandini's *Eusebius*<sup>7</sup> (1984), Paraskevaïdis's *sendas*<sup>8</sup> (1992), Aharonián's *Una carta*<sup>9</sup> (2001), and Etkin's *caminos de cornisa*<sup>10</sup> (1985).

One thing I noticed while reading about these four composers was that they had been part of a place called *Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales* (CLAEM) in Buenos Aires during the 1960s— Gandini as a teacher, the other three as students. That triggered my curiosity as a historian. This place seemed important, yet the more I looked around to learn about it, the more I realized that all that was available were scattered reports that did not capture the whole story. As it turned out, many other important composers across Latin America had attended CLAEM as students



during the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Yet a comprehensive history of CLAEM had not been written. During the following ten years, I divided my time between archival research and compiling oral histories with the goal of eventually writing that history.



**Figure 1.** Alberto Ginastera teaching the first group of fellows of CLAEM, ca. 1964. Notice on the board the beginning of Johann Sebastian Bach's Fugue in C minor BWV 847. Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center.

My archival work began by examining the surviving documentation from CLAEM at the Di Tella University in Buenos Aires, followed by research at the Rockefeller Archive Center in upstate New York and the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, Switzerland. When dealing with recent history, however, archives are not the only important sources. I decided that it was important to compile oral histories from people that had been part of CLAEM. I met, interviewed, and had fascinating conversations with most of the surviving musicians, administrators, and patrons who had been part of CLAEM's story. By far the most rewarding exchanges happened with those people with whom I met multiple

times. They became my teachers and friends. I often called them my interlocutors, a word coming from anthropology that tries to acknowledge that through dialogue and especially listening, I learned from them and thus have a responsibility of representing them in my work as faithfully and respectfully as I can. Most of them were composers in their 70s, and the majority could only provide details from the two-year period they attended CLAEM, glimpses of everyday life. Memories are not entirely reliable, of course, but these personal stories, combined with the archival sources I visited, were the primary material that I took as a historian to critically create a narrative that captured the history of CLAEM.<sup>12</sup>

CLAEM existed from 1962 to 1971 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Under the direction of Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera, CLAEM tried to address several of the issues that had hindered the development of composition in Latin America through the mid-twentieth century. CLAEM provided two-year fellowships to young composers to master the craft of composition while benefitting from an amazing roster of visiting professors and a strong group of local teachers including Ginastera himself, the center's director; Francisco Kröpfl, a pioneer in electronic music; and Gerardo Gandini, Ginastera's right hand who, despite being basically the same age as the fellows, became one of the most influential voices in the Center.

As evidence of the pervasive influence of coloniality more than a century after Argentina gained independence, European and US American compositional styles dominated the main five approaches taken by CLAEM composers:

- 1) Serialism, where musical parameters (for example, pitch, note duration, instrumentation, loudness, or register) are ordered and controlled in a specific way, and this arrangement and its transpositions, inversions, and retrogrades become the basis for a composition. A good example of this style is Mesías

Maiguashca's String Quartet No.1 (1964), which was initially called *Suite para cuarteto de cuerdas*.<sup>13</sup>

- 2) Sound mass compositions, in which large groupings of sounds are presented in such high levels of density and complexity that perceptually the result is one of sonic clouds wherein texture, timbre, and dynamics, and not pitch or rhythm, are the salient features. You can hear this approach in the work *Magma I* (1966-67) by Graciela Paraskevaïdis, the score for which was written immediately after her fellowship at CLAEM.<sup>14</sup>
- 3) The use of mobile forms and aleatoric procedures, in which several musical parameters, including form, can be the result of chance operations or a selection among multiple options, whether in composition or in performance. Some sections of Maiguashca's String Quartet mentioned above use aleatoric procedures. Another example is Jorge Antunes's *Estudo N.1 para piano* (1972), written shortly after the composer's fellowship at CLAEM.<sup>15</sup>
- 4) Graphic notation and group improvisation, in which musical parameters are not fully defined; performers are asked to make significant decisions on their own. Gabriel Brnčić's *Quodlibet IV* combines a pre-recorded electroacoustic tape and graphic notation that is interpreted by an accordion player.<sup>16</sup>
- 5) Electroacoustic music, compositions made inside a studio with various apparatuses often associated with radio production and sound recording, which at the time included such things as sound generators, reel-to-reel tape, mixers, recorders, and filters. CLAEM had invested great effort in creating an electronic music studio that was equipped as well as any other major studio in the world. As a result, many composers devoted part of their time to learning about and producing electroacoustic music. Two good examples of

this are César Bolaños's *Intensidad y altura* (1964) and Jorge Antunes's *Cinta cita* (1969).<sup>17</sup>

At this point you might be wondering how this center could be seen from a decolonizing perspective if it was providing training in a musical tradition that embodies many aspects of coloniality rooted in white supremacy, Eurocentrism, and patriarchy by privileging the music of white European male composers over any other.<sup>18</sup> You might also ask how an experience that never claimed to be decolonial can still be so. Decolonization is an ongoing project, always partial, incomplete, and doomed to result in failures that are productive because we take steps towards an ideal moment *beyond* coloniality. But, even without intentionality, decolonizing acts do happen when something challenges the dominant epistemologies from within; when colonial dynamics become revealed and concrete steps are taken to challenge them.<sup>19</sup>

CLAEM can be examined as a decolonial experience for at least three preexisting conditions that it tried to challenge. First, in training more than fifty Latin American composers, CLAEM generated enough momentum to, at the very least, minimally defy the Eurocentricity of the classical tradition's standard bearers. Many CLAEM composers became international musical ambassadors for Latin America, bringing attention to the work of other CLAEM graduates. The size of the project and its continental scope made it possible for Latin American composers around the world to gain recognition. Second, as composers in CLAEM embraced musical experimentation, central concepts like authorship, the ritual of the concert, or what was required to be a performer on stage were being challenged. In group improvisations and collective compositions, composers would find themselves performing instruments that they had little knowledge of, relying on audience participation or other external stimuli to define sections of compositions, or leaving aspects of a piece to chance. These unruly aspects

challenged colonial ontologies and epistemologies of music. And third, and perhaps most important, CLAEM fellows benefited from studying for two years in a Latin American country surrounded by composers of multiple Latin American nationalities. This, perhaps more than anything else, was a novelty that unintentionally broke some of the colonial dynamics that maintained misinformation and isolation between colonial subjects.

Consider this: before CLAEM, a composer in Argentina, Colombia, or Chile would have had minimal, if any, knowledge of the music of their colleagues in Bolivia, Peru, or Costa Rica. They would, however, know about composers in Vienna, Paris, New York, or Rome. Furthermore, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most common trajectory for a young Latin American composer was to study in Europe (particularly in Paris or Vienna), or, after the 1950s, in the United States. Looking through the stories of Latin American composers before CLAEM, you will find that many of them had established some professional ties in international festivals or summer programs like the Inter-American Music Festivals organized in Washington, D.C., or the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood. These were short events taking place outside Latin America. CLAEM changed these circumstances in a radical way by offering a long-term residence in Argentina with a cohort of composers coming from multiple Latin American nations. This alone allowed something that went against the usual postcolonial dynamics: composers were able to have firsthand contact with the music of their geographical neighbors, learn about their interests, and share the questions they were addressing with their compositions.

As previously mentioned, CLAEM never actively functioned as a decolonizing beacon—quite the contrary, as CLAEM reproduced and participated in colonial logics in many ways. First, there was a sincere belief that music progressed in a linear fashion, and CLAEM was seen as a way for Latin American composers to “catch up”

with their peers in Europe and the United States. Hidden under this belief was a modernizing discourse that maintained that these “underdeveloped” or at best “developing” countries needed to replace the “primitive” with the “civilized,” the “traditional” with the “modern.” The classical music world in Latin America was seen as being “behind” both by outsiders and insiders. Second, the flows of information from Europe and the United States continued to be privileged—in fact, the main attraction of CLAEM were the high-profile white-male resident instructors who would be teaching the biennial cohorts. The list of guests included a mix of well-established composers (Aaron Copland, Olivier Messiaen, Riccardo Malipiero, Luigi Dallapiccola, Roger Sessions) and slightly younger composers who were starting to become international names (Iannis Xenakis, Luigi Nono, Larry Austin, Earle Brown). Most of the teachers came from Europe and the United States, with very few from Latin America. Finally, we cannot forget that inseparable from coloniality were social hierarchies based on racism, colorism, sexism, and patriarchy. Unsurprisingly, there were very few female composers as students in CLAEM among the 54 attendees. After Graciela Paraskevaïdis became the first female fellow, she was followed by Marlene Fernandes (Brazil, 1932), Jacqueline Nova (Belgium/Colombia, 1935–1975), Iris Sangüesa de Ichasso (Chile, 1933) Regina Benavente de Beresiarte (Argentina, 1932), and Beatriz Lockhart (Uruguay, 1944–2015). While not openly discussed, a majority of the students were “white” within the constructions of race in Latin American countries. (While today in the United States we might label them as “People of Color,” in the local realities of their countries, these composers had class and racial privileges that often went unchecked, and the group at large did not reflect the much more racially diverse Latin America.) So, although successful in fostering the most important generation of Latin American composers for the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if examined under the lens of decolonization, CLAEM was ultimately an example of a productive failure in truly stepping out of the colonial

dynamics of a sexist, white-centric, Eurocentric music education. After all, CLAEM's intent had little to do with colonial dynamics and more to do with being a springboard for Latin American composers, placing them on equal footing with their European and United States colleagues.

## CASE STUDY 2: *CURSOS LATINOAMERICANOS DE MÚSICA CONTEMPORÁNEA*

There were many positive lessons from the CLAEM experience: the rich musical exchange facilitated by the time composers spent together, the creation of strong professional networks to support career development in years to come, and the constructive aspects of embracing a transnational Latin Americanist identity. But one of the fatal flaws of CLAEM was its absolute dependence on institutional support, either from international funding agencies like the Rockefeller Foundation, or from the local patronage of the Di Tella Institute. Around 1970, former CLAEM students Coriún Aharonián and Mariano Etkin, together with Brazilian musicologist José Maria Neves and composer Héctor Tosar, came up with the idea of creating a series of non-profit, non-institutionalized, two-week courses to be offered in the Southern hemisphere summer (December/January) and geared towards the study of classical and popular music composition, music pedagogy, musicology, and performance. The result was the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* (CLAMC, Latin American Courses on Contemporary Music) which took place between 1971 and 1984.

There were a total of fifteen courses over eighteen years in different locations around Latin America, including Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.<sup>20</sup> Two of the central organizers, Coriún Aharonián and Graciela Paraskevaídis, had been CLAEM students and were now

applying some of the lessons learned.<sup>21</sup> Aside from them, many other composers that attended CLAEM became teachers for the *Cursos*.<sup>22</sup> Like CLAEM, the *Cursos* included an impressive roster of guest professors and conference presenters but this time the presence of Latin American composers was much more prominent. Out of a total of 132 teachers in the *Cursos* (many of them in multiple years), eighty were born in Latin America, forty-six in Europe, five in the US or Canada, and one in Asia.<sup>23</sup> Male- and white-centricity did not disappear, although it improved in comparison to CLAEM.<sup>24</sup> Thirty-five of the teachers were women, as were roughly 25% of the guests. It is difficult to address race disparities when involving multiple places of origin and self-identification, but I would argue that the majority of guests were being read as “white” within the Latin American context, some as mestizo, and only a couple as Indigenous or Black. Although the students who attended were mostly from Latin America, many other nationalities were also represented. Students came from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The more diverse faculty and student body may have resulted from a conscious effort to include local and regional teachers, to dismantle the popular/art music divide, and to blur disciplinary boundaries between composition, pedagogy, research, and performance. Each iteration of the *Cursos* lasted about two weeks. Courses covered music analysis, compositional techniques, workshops on the performance of new music or the idiomatic writing for different instruments, and seminars encompassing history and philosophy of music. There was also much attention to the interactions of music with theater, dance, and film. Students and presenters attended concerts and master classes followed by moderated or unmoderated discussions.





**Figure 2.** Photo from the 13<sup>th</sup> iteration of the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* in San Cristobal, Venezuela (July 29, 1985). From left to right: Cergio Prudencio (Bolivia), Martha Rodríguez (Colombia), Álvaro Guimarães (Brazil), Graciela Paraskevaídis, Peter Schuback (Sweden), Pilar Azula (Colombia), Mauricio Villa (Colombia), and José Maria Neves (Brazil). Photo by Cheo Mora, courtesy of the Fundación Archivo Aharonián-Paraskevaídis.

Coriún Aharonián, speaking as executive secretary of the *Cursos* during the opening ceremony of its tenth iteration, explained why the courses were needed. You will notice a continuity with the idea that the Latin American music scene is lacking in comparison to the Europe-United States scene, but this time the solution proposed is quite different:

Why do these courses? Because in Latin America it is difficult to get proper training [...] it is difficult to be informed in order to be trained (*informarse, a fin de formarse*) [...] it is difficult to have access to excellent or even good teachers [...] it is difficult to keep institutions alive [...] it is impossible to finance expensive

solutions to any of these problems. Therefore, we have arrived at [these courses as] a solution that can be qualified as “cultural militancy,” in which professors and organizers work for free to contribute to the education of Latin American musicians and contribute a little in the historical process of our mixed-heritage (*mestizo*) continent.<sup>25</sup>

While there were no explicit decolonial postures in the creation of CLAEM, the Latin American *Cursos* overtly looked to fight specific colonial logics: 1) dependence on unstable institutions suffering from political turmoil, 2) weak economies that resulted from a legacy of colonial exploitation, 3) capitalist logics in which professional training comes with a high price that peoples in weaker economies cannot afford, and 4) the preference given to performers and composers of Western European and North American rather than Latin American origin. Politically and logistically, the courses aimed to counteract the deteriorated financial and political circumstances of the region. Financially, the main preoccupation was to make registration as inexpensive as possible for students, even at the cost of working for free in organizing the events and only paying international guests for transportation and room and board. Cultural work to expand artistic training was seen as political action, and many of the members involved were willing to forgo pay even when their own monetary conditions were limited. Long gone were the splendid resources made available to CLAEM by the Rockefeller Foundation. These *Cursos* were seen as a grassroots operation with a clear socio-political agenda to create professional networks even beyond financial constraints. The organizers were adamant about not being attached to any one institution to maintain their independence. They made sure that external funds could only be accepted “as long as they do not imply conditions or commitments.” Similarly, help with the making of posters and abstract books would be accepted, but never “in exchange for publicity.”<sup>26</sup>

That these radical ideas were not just being discussed but in fact being implemented in the *Cursos* made some strong impressions on guest presenters. In 1968, before being invited as a guest teacher to the *Cursos*, United States composer Gordon Mumma had visited Buenos Aires together with John Cage and the Cunningham Dance Company. On that occasion he met several CLAEM fellows and noted that “they were an aristocracy of artists, uncomfortably aware of their privileged positions in an underprivileged and politically repressed continent.”<sup>27</sup> Years later, in a personal journal kept during his visit to Uruguay for the 1975 *Cursos*, Mumma seemed to notice a change. He wrote, “I am beginning to suspect that societies may be obsessed with technology not for the usual stated purpose—‘to improve the conditions of people’—but rather to perpetuate by the force of technological power the brutality of colonialist or racist conditions. This statement is not a political gesture, but an expression of doubt about my own involvement with technology and what good it really is to anyone.”<sup>28</sup> Mumma’s doubts were triggered by the days he spent discussing the different technologies he had used to create music and realizing that they were “difficult to duplicate without a massive industrial economy (much of that technology was developed for military purposes).”<sup>29</sup> Mumma implies that the perpetual and inevitable failure of Third World countries to fulfill the expectations and desires of having the technologies of the so-called First World becomes a source of perpetuation of a racialized (self)coloniality. In other words, social, historical, and economic factors ensure that there is never a true moment of “catching up” from that feeling of “being behind.”

Perhaps as a response to this preoccupation, a local notion had been developing in music circles connected to the *Cursos* called *tecnología pobre*, meaning both poor technology and technology of the poor. It was an artistic embrace of productive failure. Composers sought out the aesthetic possibilities of older equipment and

insufficiently funded studios and simultaneously chose austerity when selecting musical resources, a kind of minimalism quite different from the European and US kind. In an interview, Coriún Aharonián reflected upon the idea of *tecnología pobre*: “there is an irony here, a kind of return to sender of something the rich tossed at us. Rich countries invented the *arte povera*,” said Aharonián, referring to an art movement in the 1960s and 70s that embraced the use of everyday unconventional or impoverished materials. “They invented *arte povera* and we replied with an *arte povera* of the poor. We were the actual poor, the real *povera*, not the *povera* of the rich who chooses to use burlap because it is fashionable to use something that rough. We used burlap because there was nothing else.”<sup>30</sup> In a sense, the *Cursos* were a local response to similar types of summer music courses organized in the First World, but instead of relying on ample funding and resources, they proudly took up what they already had around them.

The adoption of a *tecnología pobre* was just one of the ways in which the *Cursos* addressed colonial dynamics in a much more direct way than in CLAEM. In the opening ceremony to the tenth iteration of the *Cursos*, Coriún Aharonián shared with the participants some of the problems the event was trying to respond to:

Latin America is a colonial territory. One of the manifestations of coloniality is the castration of all potential creators. In order to ensure the political and economic hegemony of the imperial metropolis, it is necessary for all cultural models to be produced or at least controlled by the metropolitan masters of power. The possible existence of full-fledged creators in the colonial territories would mean the possible generation of alternative, autonomous, and autochthonous cultural models, and that is very dangerous. [...] Another aspect is communication, or rather, the lack of communication. For the imperial project, it is compulsory to have good communication between a colony and the metropolis, but it is also convenient to have poor communication between colonies.<sup>31</sup>

While his understanding of coloniality when he uttered these words in 1981 might be different from ours today, he nevertheless demonstrated a concrete desire to fight its logics, among them the production of new ideas in culture or the control over the circulation of information. As a productive failure in the attempts to decolonize classical music, the *Cursos* were significantly more successful than CLAEM before them. With a clear awareness and desire to dismantle colonial logics, the *Cursos* searched for ways to combat the isolation and disinformation that musicians suffered across the continent, and the expected result was to generate alternative cultural models to those emanating from abroad. So then, why a productive failure? Well, it is only partially because not all students continued the militant commitment demonstrated by the organizers of the *Cursos* but also because the efforts ended when it was clear there was no interest among the younger generation of musicians to continue them. However, among the participants in the *Cursos*, both as teacher and organizer, was a young Bolivian composer, Cergio Prudencio. And one of the most important contributions he has made in his career is precisely that alternative model exemplified in our third and final case study, the *Orquesta Experimental de Instrumentos Nativos*, OEIN (Experimental Orchestra of Native Instruments).

### CASE STUDY 3: ORQUESTA EXPERIMENTAL DE INSTRUMENTOS NATIVOS

In creating a historical narrative, one could make the case that the experiences learned from CLAEM led to the creation of the *Cursos* as much as the teachings and philosophy from the *Cursos* informed the creation of Bolivia's *Orquesta Experimental de Instrumentos Nativos*. It also makes sense that from the three case studies explored in this article, the one project grounded openly and directly on ideas about decolonization and the valuing of

Indigenous peoples and knowledges took place in Bolivia. From all the countries in the Americas, Bolivia retains the largest percentage of Indigenous population, with nearly 50% of its citizens belonging to Quechua and Aymara Indigenous groups in addition to 36 more recognized Indigenous peoples.<sup>32</sup> OEIN was created in 1979 by Cergio Prudencio—alongside César Junaro, Daniel Limache, and José Luis Prudencio, Cergio's brother—and had its debut concert in May of 1980.<sup>33</sup> Cergio Prudencio was a student and eventually teacher at the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea*. As OEIN's director from 1980 to 2016, Prudencio envisioned an orchestra within the classical music tradition that would engage with Indigenous Andean musical practices, an engagement “not simply with the instruments themselves, but also with the pedagogies, histories, and worldviews of which the instruments are the material manifestations...”<sup>34</sup> His purpose was to have classically trained musicians learn and engage with Indigenous musics of Bolivia. Despite their identification as “mestizos” (a racial/cultural category indicating mixed heritage, usually understood as European and Indigenous), many of the members of OEIN, and most Bolivians in general, are descendants of Indigenous peoples. However, these musicians in general were not involved with musical practices connected to this ancestry. Growing up in urban centers, many had received training in classical music, and only had a surface understanding of the different Indigenous musical practices taking place in their own country.

The goal of OEIN was to have these musicians work in an ensemble dedicated to creating a different kind of classical music, one that would connect them with a heritage that had been under attack for centuries with attempts to “whiten” or “civilize” the local populations. Prudencio and the performers that joined the orchestra were looking for a sound-space that could better speak to their own Bolivian experience, their musicking and training within a European tradition, their heritage from which they

were estranged, and their existence in a country with a majority of Indigenous population and rich in Indigenous heritage and cultural practices. The way OEIN was organized shows five crucial realizations among organizers and members:

- 1) As a result of their life conditions (many were urban Bolivians of mixed descent, and many were urban Indigenous peoples educated in a large city) they had not learned much about other heritages they were connected to (namely, their Indigenous heritages).
- 2) Classical music was part of their heritage, since, after all, there had been classical music performance and training in the Bolivian territories from the very beginning of the colonial invasion of the Inca territories by Spain in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. They did not feel as if they were playing a foreign (European) tradition, but rather a musical tradition that circulated in multiple parts of the world—one they had grown up listening to and playing, and that was just as much theirs as it was for young musicians in Vienna or Paris.
- 3) Despite this, the repertoire and names that were most representative of this tradition all came from outside Bolivia and involved “dead white men” (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, Stravinsky, or Copland).<sup>35</sup>
- 4) They could find their space in this tradition not by repeating the past, but by committing to the present through the performance of new works. Prudencio referred to the “creation” as opposed to the “recreation” of culture.
- 5) Classical music instruments carried already an enormous colonial heritage; as technologies, they responded to logics of the colonizer. Choosing to use local Indigenous instruments in a way that made sense to the original traditions they derived from allowed at least a partial distancing from these logics.

The resulting ensemble involves a unique kind of hybridity. OEIN is an orchestra that participates in the classical music tradition and its practices. The music is performed in concerts with audiences, following the ritualized choreographies of entering and leaving the stage, having seated groupings according to instrument families, and having internal hierarchies beginning with the figure of the conductor.<sup>36</sup> The instrumentation they choose, however, is uniquely found in the Andes of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina. They embark on a life-long learning process of *sikus* (panpipes), *tarkas* (internal duct flutes), *pinkillus* (end-blown duct flutes), *quenas* (end-notched flutes), *mohoceños* (duct flutes with mouth pipes), and *pifanos* (transverse flutes). (You can listen to OEIN here.<sup>37</sup>) To do so, they invited culture bearers of Indigenous communities to teach them about the instruments, theories, musical practices, and aesthetics of Indigenous Andean music. To this day, OEIN positions the work of Indigenous thinkers and artists as central to their project, and a great part of their work involves learning about indigeneity through music making. When going back to their original classical music training, they use this knowledge to treat the instruments not simply as material facilitators, but as alternative technologies that contrast those of traditional classical music. In a similar way, composers who were invited to write for the ensemble (including Prudencio himself) were invited to engage in a productive dialogue with Indigenous traditions by learning about the practices, the aesthetics, and, most importantly, the people that produce that music. OEIN's repertoire had to be built from scratch and by composers that would have to learn about the broader cultural implications of this new instrumentation.

In discussing classical music engagements with Indigenous musics, Dylan Robinson, in his book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, describes two distinct approaches. On one hand, Robinson talks about “inclusionary



music,” “inclusionary modes of collaboration,” and “inclusionary musical performance.” In this inclusionary model, Indigenous content (but not structures) is incorporated in a way that increases representation but does not redefine the structures of inclusion or the relationship between the Indigenous and the European.<sup>38</sup> He argues that inclusionary music performance

may demonstrate a sharing of space—a visual and kinetic intermingling of bodies on stage, an acoustic blending of musics, or a mixed use of languages—but this integration often remains premised on finding a way to ‘fit’ indigenous musicians into Western paradigms of performance. In such performance, the fundamental tenets of Western musical genres and form remain intact, thereby reinforcing settler structural logic: the structure of the aesthetic might be enriched by other sights and sounds without unsettling the worldview it supports.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, he describes Indigenous+art music as a category that “foregrounds a resistance to integration, and signals the affectively awkward, incompatible, or irreconcilable nature of such meeting.”<sup>40</sup> The formulation Indigenous+art music includes that “+” sign to indicate a point of meeting but also a resistance to simple merging, a disruption of “intercultural music’s implication of union, hybridity, syncretism, and reconciliation.”<sup>41</sup> I do not see Robinson’s categories as absolutes, labels that one could apply with certainty, at least not always. But I do believe they provide an interesting starting ground to consider what it is that OEIN accomplishes and what it does not. OEIN’s work seems to exist in a meeting point of Robinson’s “inclusionary” and “Indigenous+art music models,” at a boundary between appreciation and appropriation. I am not convinced either one fully captures what is going on here, and this add to our consideration of the complexities of decolonizing acts.



**Figure 3.** Prudencio and an ensemble derived from OEIN featuring a *wankara* drum (left), a *bombo* (right), *quenenas* (being played), and *sikus* (resting) in front of the performers. Photo from OEIN's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/oeinbolivia/photos>).

Cergio Prudencio retired from OEIN in 2016 and today the program is directed by Carlos Gutiérrez. Rachel Horner's work illustrates how the orchestra continues to employ a three-pronged strategy to destabilize the classical music world in which they participate, involving: a) education through an introductory program in music for ages 8–13 in which students learn various Indigenous musical instruments without the use of written scores, emphasizing close cooperation with one another and reducing the role of individuality; b) commissioning works that, functioning within the classical music world, use the Indigenous instruments and rely on a new and unique sound palette that composers would have to study and learn from; and c) performing Indigenous music together with new compositions commissioned for the ensemble.<sup>42</sup> From our earlier mention of ontological and epistemological

questions, you can see here that there is a challenge to the colonial premises of how we learn music, what it means to compose, and what we get out of music. And a lot of this is mediated through teachings from Indigenous culture bearers, yet still shaped by the tenets of classical music.

I share Horner's concerns when she points out that OEIN's approach still struggles with many aspects of colonial epistemologies.<sup>43</sup> What does that mean? As we saw earlier, *epistemology* is a word that tries to capture the notion of what things are considered knowledge, what are the paths that we consider appropriate to gain that knowledge, which knowledges are valued as more "truthful" than others, and what philosophers sometimes simplify to "how do we know what we know?" One colonial epistemology at play in OEIN's approach has to do with how live music making takes place. Many Indigenous music traditions in the Andes are participatory, which means that the success of a particular musical event has more to do with the sociability it generates, with the amount of involvement of everybody present in the music making, and less with the distinction between artist and audience. However, because it participates in the classical music world, OEIN functions within a mainly presentational framework, meaning there is a marked separation of a "work of art" from everyday life, there is a strict artist/audience divide, the goal of music making is often quality of performance, there is intense practice required, and music is something meant to be listened to.<sup>44</sup>

The case of OEIN, just like CLAEM and the *Cursos Latinoamericanos*, highlights the complexities, failures, and tensions of participating in decolonial projects. More than CLAEM, and with longer-term expectations than the *Cursos*, Prudencio saw OEIN as an opportunity to decolonize the world of classical music. Like our other examples, the extent to which these experiences have been successful in doing so varies, but one thing is certain: few other instances in the Latin American classical music world have had such a long-lasting effect as OEIN.



**Figure 4.** OEIN in a typical classical music concert moment. Performers and conductors standing, facing the audience. Notice the uniform clothing and the young age of some of the performers. Photo from OEIN’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/oeinbolivia/photos>).

## CAN DECOLONIZATION HAPPEN?

The three snapshots described here present various decolonial strategies taking place within the world of classical music making, each with an increasing amount of clarity of the broader project they are part of, and each demonstrating different degrees of success and failure. So, now it is your time to think critically. To what extent are the examples examined here truly examples of decolonization? In contrast, drawing again on Tuck and Yang, to what extent are they part of “settler moves to innocence,” which use “strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all?”<sup>45</sup> As you can imagine from this text, I believe they are part of a process of decolonizing classical music, a particularly colonialist practice rooted in white supremacy, Eurocentrism, and patriarchy. They get some things right and have many

blind spots. Issues of patriarchy, white supremacy, and Eurocentrism are far from resolved in any of these cases, and their shortcomings evidently weaken their effectiveness as decolonizing projects. Nevertheless, I present them as moves in a positive direction while necessarily incomplete. But you might notice things I missed, or you might question some of my assertions. Can a project like CLAEM, which evidently begins from a strictly modernizing effort following the logics of colonialism, become a practice of resistance against coloniality? Are the *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea* addressing only superficial aspects of the colonial structures behind classical music under a socialist rhetoric that avoids confronting the deeper structural forces that shape classical music as a sustainer of colonialism? Is it possible to decolonize while still following basic tenets of capitalism? How are anti-colonial practices different from decolonizing? Can we truly claim that what OEIN is proposing is not just appropriating the practices of others? How can we differentiate appropriation from decolonizing efforts to learn from Indigenous thinkers and creators? You, as a reader, should make the final interpretation of what I have presented here, think critically about it, and make sense of it through your own experiences and ideas. For many of us, this means asking more questions instead of providing easy answers. Critical thinking needs to be informed by your own research, by your own quest to learn more about these and other topics. With your interpretation, you contribute to the knowledge that emerges from the creation of historical narratives such as this one.<sup>46</sup>

## NOTES

1. Coriún Aharonián, “Factores de identidad musical latinoamericana tras cinco siglos de conquista, dominación y mestizaje,” *Latin American Music Review* 15, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1994): 189–225. I know the approximate date because I still have my electronic notes on it and the file was created June 2, 2004.
2. *Ibid.*, 201.
3. John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

4. Something I do not engage with in this essay and that remains to be the proverbial elephant in the room is that if we recognize the ways settler colonialism and exploitative colonialism worked, then the project of decolonization should involve the repatriation of land and reparations for the robbing of resources. This is not the same as seeing decolonization as a desire for social justice and anti-racist changes in societies and schools. Like the title of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's influential article reminds us, decolonization is not a metaphor. However, I would argue that colonization is not a closed, solvable system, and more importantly—without diminishing Tuck and Yang's point—it cannot be just about land. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.
5. The colonization of Latin America had elements of extractive and settler colonialism. There are some differences here with regions where Anglo-Protestant and other forces from Europe were dominant, but for this essay I encourage the reader to consider the commonalities instead.
6. Classic texts on these topics include Melville Herskovits, *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1958); Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); and Nestor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
7. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CH8YHC06gFY> or <https://open.spotify.com/track/346WogYw7ojOYbQmqqKFNB?si=YdNDO6kSR9a8YsnrqdLcmw>.
8. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaLZ2iKHZr4>. Sendas II: Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe7e rztM9m4>. Sendas III: Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28wMnCHxyFA>, Sendas IV: Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMfg3rww8ow> or <https://open.spotify.com/album/6pPjlxRyBhQYRqH5oxiziN?si=HdKJHsbgQ3muBgboR8weoA>
9. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLucrBgMxGs> or <https://open.spotify.com/track/oFroIS7toLmvyZDTrrL2UH?si=QYFZoyT2S7qKvD-FPA6nxw>.
10. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vO9ykMx2Xl> or [https://open.spotify.com/track/4wvTsKYytAjwH4xvszNlqp?si=SGPkdw6AQ-SMM\\_SclULSgq](https://open.spotify.com/track/4wvTsKYytAjwH4xvszNlqp?si=SGPkdw6AQ-SMM_SclULSgq).
11. For example, Oscar Bazan (1936–2005), Eduardo Kusnir (1940), and Alcides Lanza (1928) from Argentina, Marlos Nobre (1939) and Jorge Antunes (1940) from Brazil, Gabriel Brnčić (1942) from Chile, Alberto Villalpando (1940) from Bolivia, Blas



- Emilio Atehortúa (1935–2020) and Jacqueline Nova (1935–1975) from Colombia, Mesías Maiguashca (1931) from Ecuador, Jorge Sarmientos (1933–2012) and Joaquín Orellana (1930) from Guatemala, César Bolaños (1931–2012) from Peru, and Rafael Aponte-Ledée (1938) from Puerto Rico, among many others.
12. Of course, every history is incomplete. The Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot once said that silences enter history in at least four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (e.g., many interactions might have happened over the phone, leaving no physical trace behind); the moment of fact assembly (e.g., many documents might have not been kept or donated to archives, or archivists might have seen no use in keeping them); the moment of fact retrieval (that is *me*, reading documents, looking at pictures, examining newspapers, creating a narrative with them, and leaving out things that I decided were not as important as others), and the moment of retrospective significance (that is *you*, as you interpret what I give you here, and consider certain aspects more important than others shaped by your own experiences and the world you live in). Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.
  13. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHoX2TJS6-c>.
  14. The recording: Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://soundcloud.com/m-sica-latinnoamericana/magma-i-graciela-paraskevaidis-argentinauruguay-1940>. The score: Accessed March 1, 2022, <http://www.gp-magma.net/pdf/partituras/MAGMAIgeneralfinal.pdf>.
  15. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-O-8qAk6eM>.
  16. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpgXb2AG92k>.
  17. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://open.spotify.com/track/3Y4eAerXlpJcwYwAMZZt6F?si=eCJ3FoKOT2uVWjdxheyojA> and <https://open.spotify.com/track/003PrC2uxeYkEuqNWU5XcN?si=HtURWPk7SAK2Ovp6p9nvPw>.
  18. For a fantastic analysis related to these issues, see Loren Kajikawa, “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in US Schools and Departments of Music,” in *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness Across the Disciplines*, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Charles Harris, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and George Lipsitz, eds. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 155–74.
  19. Thanks to Rachel Horner for some of her clarifying thoughts on this matter.
  20. The exact locations were Cerro del Toro, Uruguay (1971, 1972, 1974, 1975), Buenos Aires, Argentina (1976, 1977), São João del-Rei, Brazil (1978, 1979), Itapira, Brazil, (1980), Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic (1981), Uberlândia, Brazil (1982), Tatuí, Brazil (1984), San Cristóbal, Venezuela (1985), Cerro del Toro, Uruguay (1986), and Mendes, Brazil (1989). Graciela Paraskevaidis, “Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea: Documentación,”

*Latinoamerica-Música* (2014). Accessed March 1, 2022, <http://www.latinoamerica-musica.net/historia/pdfs/prologo.pdf>.

21. Led by executive secretary Coriún Aharonián, the team helping organize the meetings included Conrado Silva (Uruguay/Brazil), José Maria Neves (Brazil), Graciela Paraskevaídis (Argentina/Uruguay), Cergio Prudencio (Bolivia), Héctor Tosar (Uruguay), Miguel Marozzi (Uruguay), Emilio Mendoza (Venezuela), and María Teresa Sande (Uruguay). Paraskevaídis, “Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea: Documentación.”
22. Oscar Bazán (Argentina, 1936–2005), León Biriotti (Uruguay, b. 1929), Mariano Etkin, Marlene Fernandes, Eduardo Kusnir, Mesías Maiguashca, José Ramón Maranzano (Argentina, b. 1940), Ariel Martínez (Uruguay, 1940–2019), Joaquín Orellana, and Alberto Villalpando. Some of the most prominent guests were Louis Andriessen, Beatriz Balzi, Konrad Boehmer, Hilda Dianda, Zoila Gomez, Klaus Huber, Mario Lavista, Helmut Lachenmann, Gilberto Mendes, Gordon Mumma, Luigi Nono, Jocy de Olivera, Foke Rabe, Alfredo Rugeles, Dieter Schnebel, and Philip Tagg, among others.
23. Among the most recognizable names are Louis Andriessen, Konrad Boehmer, Klaus Huber, Nicolaus Huber, Yannis Ioannidis, Helmut Lachenmann, Gilberto Mendes, Gordon Mumma, Luigi Nono, Foke Rabe, Alfredo Rugeles, Dieter Schnebel, and Philip Tagg.
24. Here I am only taking into account the people listed by Paraskevaídis as professors and not those listed as assistant professors, giving a lecture (*conferencistas*), or students invited to give a lecture.
25. Quoted in compilation by Graciela Paraskevaídis, “Anexos,” *Latinoamerica-Música* (2014). Accessed March 1, 2022, <http://www.latinoamerica-musica.net/historia/pdfs/Anexos-2014.pdf>.
26. Coriún Aharonián, “Circular genérica sobre organización de los Cursos latinoamericanos de música contemporánea según la experiencia habida al año 1983 y sin mucho orden, emitida por la secretaría ejecutiva en noviembre de 1983, en Montevideo,” cited in Paraskevaídis, “Anexos.”
27. Gordon Mumma, “Twenty-five Minutes with John Cage,” in *Cybersonic Arts: Adventures in American New Music*, ed. Michelle Fillion (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 185–86. Many thanks to Reader 1 for pointing out this statement by Mumma.
28. Gordon Mumma, “Urugayan Diary: The *Cursos Latinoamericanos de Música Contemporánea*, Cerro del Toro, Uruguay, January 3–17, 1975,” *Cybersonic Arts*, 226.
29. Ibid.
30. Coriún Aharonián, interviewed by the author, August 17, 2008 (Montevideo, Uruguay).



31. Quoted in Paraskevaïdis, “Anexos.”
32. The decolonizing efforts in Bolivia reached a new level with the election of Bolivia’s first Indigenous president, Evo Morales (2006–2019). His political program was focused on the concepts of plurinationality, interculturality, and decoloniality. His initial push for nationalizing national resources, redistributing land, and education and healthcare reform were framed under a socialist project. Eventually many were disappointed that Morales still played within neoliberal economic frameworks despite his outward-facing nationalist indigeneity.
33. The majority of the research done about OEIN in English comes from Rachel Horner, “Instruments of Change: Musical Decolonization and Bolivia’s *Orquesta Experimental de Instrumentos Nativos*” (unpublished manuscript, February 8, 2020). I am incredibly thankful for her contributions to this section of this paper.
34. Horner, “Instruments of Change.”
35. This is no small realization: having worked with classical music students for many years, I have often found students suddenly realizing that throughout their training they have never played music by a female composer, music from their own country, music by living composers, or music by people who were part of the LGBTQ+ community. In other words, many musicians take years to realize they have not played music created by people like them.
36. For an ethnographic, critical look at these traditions, see Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).
37. Accessed March 1, 2022, <https://vimeo.com/77734853>.
38. Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 6.
39. Ibid, 8.
40. Ibid, 9.
41. Ibid.
42. Horner, “Instruments of Change.”
43. Ibid.
44. Thomas Turino, “Participatory and Presentational Performance,” in *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 23–65.
45. Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” 10.
46. I want to thank Ana Alonso-Minutti, Rachel Horner, the peer reviewers, and this volume’s editors for their valuable feedback and comments to early drafts of this text.

# REIMAGINING THE REPRESENTATION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE: THE PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY OF A DIGITAL HUMANITIES PROJECT

By Jennifer Fraser and Gabriela Linares

JENNIFER FRASER

*When I was thirteen, I traveled to Japan on my own to visit my pen pal, a friend I made after her father stayed with my family. The experience of cultural difference was intense for a young girl on her own who'd never been to a non-English-speaking country and who didn't speak much Japanese beyond rudimentary phrases. In some ways, however, I feel like this experience set me down the path of a career dedicated to understanding, explaining, and celebrating cultural differences, including musical ones. Somewhere after that visit I obtained a shakuhachi (an end-blown bamboo flute). I started going to the public library to devour LP records from around the world. Then, in high school, I was introduced to this thing called ethnomusicology after seeing a documentary about music in Tuva. I've never figured out just what documentary I saw, but I was hooked. Music and travel—that's what I wanted to do.*

*When I went to college, I actively pursued ethnomusicology, and quickly developed a less romanticized notion of what the field involved. I had the fortune during my B.A. to conduct fieldwork in Indonesia, exploring and documenting sonic practices. I've been engaged in ethnomusicology since the early 1990s. As I have taught generations of undergraduate students about ethnomusicology over the last 15 years, including one I am proud to call my co-author, I came to question why we privilege the written word to represent the rich sensorial performative worlds we study. The digital project that we introduce here is very much a result of my experiences teaching at a liberal arts college. It's a response, in part, to what, where, and who I teach. I am now dedicated to the public humanities, including developing co-constructed and accessible public-facing formats, both for my own scholarship and for students in my classes. I am excited to take you inside the project and to do so with my recently graduated collaborator, Gabriela Linares.*

#### GABRIELA LINARES

*During my undergraduate years as a voice major, I became interested in the ethnography of sound, leading me to also declare a musicology major with a focus in ethnomusicology. This experience fundamentally shifted the way I engage with and think about music. I am now more alert to the ways in which music is intertwined within political and social movements. It can be very easy for students—and instructors—to conform to colonialist frameworks within academia. They are, for example, very prominent in classes in music theory, music history, or others where curricula are centered around canons of white, European music and systems of engaging with it. I remember sitting in my first undergraduate music theory class as a woman of color who did not grow up in the U.S. and feeling lost. The music that represented my identity and fueled my passion for music and singing was in no way close to what was prioritized or considered appropriate for examination in my classes. Whenever music outside the canon would appear in my*

*courses, its inclusion was tokenistic at best: worthy of comparison, but not serious consideration in its own right.*

*Students of color often don't feel part of "the history" taught in music curricula and are often dehumanized by the white supremacist narratives taught in schools, colleges and conservatories. The excluded histories of marginalized communities, those communities at the center of current socio-political movements, have been historically expressed through music, art, and poetry. Because music is central to humanity, diverse practices studied in the ethnomusicology classroom may allow us to fill in these gaps in history and decenter dominant white narratives by exemplifying the voices of those who have been oppressed and misrepresented. There is a need for more conversation and a multiplicity of voices when studying this thing we call "music." With the help of ethnographic research that works with and for a community, we can engage with music and people in a meaningful way.*

*As a student in ethnomusicology, I confronted and reconsidered a series of questions: Who has the power to write the history of music? Who is the intended audience of our scholarship? What is the goal of it? Ultimately, the most important question for me is: who is benefitting from this research and why is it being conducted? I learned that one has to be aware about the space they occupy when conducting research and how one's background, race, gender, sexuality, and economic status may inform the ways we interact with and are perceived by others. Being in the field of ethnomusicology exposed how much work there is to do in the music academy. As a student and academic of color, I am committed to entering uncomfortable places that were not created for nor catered to me. In my career, I aim to change and decenter mainstream approaches in order to see growth in curricula and move away from colonialist practices. This way we can expose the importance of the excluded musical narratives and move toward the expansion of curricula moldable to different identities and experiences with music.*

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At its heart, ethnography is storytelling. Just like investigative journalists, oral historians, and documentary filmmakers, ethnographers are interested in telling stories about people and their experiences. But the focus of the stories and the methods for collecting and presenting them vary between these approaches. Ethno/musicologists<sup>1</sup> who use ethnographic methods research the human experience through sound, music, movement, gesture, and/or other related practices. They are concerned with how these practices are embedded in social lives and inflected with cultural, political, gendered, racial, economic, and other factors. Ethnographers tell stories about these performative practices but especially about the people who engage with them. They are concerned with the meanings these practices hold in people's lives.

By invoking the word “story” here we don't mean to imply that these are entirely fictionalized accounts, but rather that they are always subjective and shaped for a targeted audience. In sharing ethnographic knowledge, there is always the question of which stories to tell, how to tell them, and through what media. Those questions can be answered in part by thinking about the following ones: What is the purpose of the ethnographic project? What audience are the authors trying to reach? Whose voices are amplified and whose are marginalized or excluded from those accounts? How ethnographers choose to represent ethnographic knowledge shapes and restricts their arguments. Print media offer one set of advantages, while audio recordings, films, and podcasts offer others. Ethnographers are ultimately curators of material. They—we—must consider which medium best represents the material evidence and which reaches the right audience.

In this essay, we ask how ethnographers might harness the power of digital tools affiliated with the Digital Humanities (glossed for now as the intersection of digital technology with humanistic inquiry) to explore new ways to tell these stories and share ethnographic knowledge. If each medium chosen by

a scholar offers particular advantages and limits, what does a digital format offer that print or audio or video alone does not? We argue that engaging with the Digital Humanities presents a creative possibility, an opportunity to think outside the box. Digital platforms offer exciting possibilities to re-envision the shape of ethnographic stories and expand potential audiences for them. For example, digital platforms let ethnographers move away from the emphasis on the written word and, instead, play with the presentation of stories by exploring non-linear formats. Digital platforms offer visualization tools that enable new ways of conceptualizing the data. They provide a series of other interactive tools that allow users to make discoveries for themselves, offering multiple pathways for navigating and interpreting the material. They enable the integration and annotation of multimedia, providing users with a more sensory experience than words alone. They allow collaboration and facilitate the presentation of multiple authorial voices. In conceptualizing and designing the project we discuss here, we were particularly attracted to the capacity of the digital to make scholarly projects public-facing and accessible to communities with whom ethno/musicologists work. So much scholarly knowledge is inaccessible to the public, either because it is behind a paywall or because it is laden with alienating technical jargon. Digital platforms, however, allow free access to anyone with an internet connection. They also offer multiple modes of engaging material.

Just as importantly, the Digital Humanities contribute to the shifting landscape and conversations about ways to engage ethically in music studies, and especially in ethno/musicology. These shifts include calls for decolonizing, decentering, and intervening in traditional modes of scholarly production through anti-colonial projects;<sup>2</sup> community engagement through applied or activist projects;<sup>3</sup> public ethno/musicology;<sup>4</sup> collaborative ethnography;<sup>5</sup> and repatriation.<sup>6</sup> The Digital Humanities offer one possible intervention among many. They allow scholars, teachers,

and students to grapple with issues of representation and authorial voice in ethnography.

This essay presents a collaboratively-designed Digital Humanities project, *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*,<sup>7</sup> as a model to help you think through the possibilities of the digital. Following the philosophy of acknowledging the collaborative production of knowledge,<sup>8</sup> this article has been collaboratively conceived and written by a teacher-scholar, Jennifer, and her recently graduated student collaborator, Gabriela, who worked closely with Jennifer on the design and construction of the digital project from July 2020 to June 2021. *Song in the Sumatran Highlands* is a large-scale, interactive, interpretative, multimedia ethnography and archive that celebrates and documents saluang, a prominent Minangkabau vocal genre from West Sumatra, Indonesia. In this article, we introduce you to the project's methodology, philosophy, and interventions. As you read about the Digital Humanities and this project, we invite you to think about the various media through which you have encountered scholarly knowledge thus far. How is our project similar to or different from other ethno/musicological work you have encountered? What does our digital format offer that other media do not? While the project we share here is large-scale, Digital Humanities projects need not be. We aim to introduce you to tools and ways of thinking that you might consider applying to your own, smaller-scale research projects in an effort to make humanities work more public-facing. As you read along, we invite you to be creative. Think about the sonic stories you want to tell, what tools you need to tell them, and what medium best fits each story.

The project at the heart of this article, *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*, is based on the ethnographic research of Jennifer in West Sumatra, Indonesia since 1998. We therefore provide a very brief introduction to ethnographic methods in general, followed by description of Jennifer's research and the role of ethnography in the classroom. We then outline the philosophy of Digital Humanities before focusing on the project. We conclude with a

call for students and scholars alike to take up Digital Humanities to share ethnographic work.

## A VERY BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Just as there are multiple ethno/musicologies or ways of practicing ethno/musicology around the world,<sup>9</sup> as Samuel Araújo points out, there are “many possible modes of doing ethnographies of musical practices” and ways to share ethnomusicological work.<sup>10</sup> Here we just have room to discuss the ethnographic practice that produced *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*. This methodology, often known as fieldwork, is a process of long-term, immersive learning that investigates the ways in which sound, music, and related practices are embedded in social lives. While visiting “the field” used to mean going somewhere “else,” now “the field” exists anywhere, ranging from home to abroad and taking place anywhere sound and related practices are produced and/or consumed: a nightclub, a conservatory, a recording studio, a city, a village, and beyond.<sup>11</sup> An ethnographer might be intimately familiar with and from the sonic world they are studying or relatively new to it. The ideal “long-term” duration of fieldwork can mean months, a year, or longer. “Immersion” means that to the greatest extent possible, an ethnographer joins the community under consideration: they reside with a local family; learn the local language; and abide by local customs and rules of social life, including modes of dress, eating, and communicating. This process is obviously easier if one is doing ethnography at “home,” but even that is complicated by a different set of factors. Ethnographic research for an ethno/musicologist can involve a range of different activities: learning to play, sing or make music within the genre/s of interest; making audiovisual documentation of performances and processes; conducting interviews (see fig. 1); taking notes; and hanging out. Jennifer has engaged in each of these activities to varying degrees.<sup>12</sup>





**Figure 1.** Jennifer in the process of interviewing Te E, a well-known singer.

Jennifer's interest in *saluang*, the vocal and flute genre at the heart of *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*, began when she first heard the Smithsonian Folkways recording, *Night Music of West Sumatra*.<sup>13</sup> She subsequently became an exchange student at Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia (ASKI for short, the College of Indonesian Arts, which has been renamed twice since) for a year in 1998–1999. That was followed by 14 months of doctoral fieldwork in 2003–2004. Return trips in the summers of 2010, 2015, and 2016 all involved research with *saluang*. Her positionality structured the process of fieldwork. For example, as an unmarried, childless, cisgender white woman, research on *saluang* presented some challenges. *Saluang* performances happen late at night. In the conservative Muslim society where Jennifer conducted research,

it was not appropriate for a woman to be out at night on her own. She needed an appropriate chaperone, someone to escort her to and from performances. Different men over the years have filled these roles. In 2016, she hired an assistant, Saiful Hadi, known on the saluang circuit as Pak Ketua



**Figure 2.** Jennifer and Saiful Hadi working on translating song texts.

Jennifer didn't think of Saiful as secondary; his centrality to the process made him a collaborator in the research.<sup>14</sup> His network and connections enabled, and also constrained, her experience and knowledge of the genre. Saiful's influence on Jennifer's work reinforces what we've already said: ethnographic research is *always* partial. Ethnographers have access to a particular set of experiences, like a videographer capturing one angle at a time. Furthermore, an ethnographer's presence at events shifts the dynamics of them.<sup>15</sup> For example, Jennifer and Saiful Hadi became the subject of teasing song texts. That might not have happened if Jennifer had been a man, transgender, married, or accompanied by her partner.

As you can see, fieldwork is crucial to the way ethnographers collect, interpret, and then share knowledge. It is to representation—how knowledge is shared—that we now turn.

## INSPIRATION FOR A PERSONAL SHIFT IN REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICES

In the United States, graduate schools and institutions of higher education generally encourage scholars to follow conventional paths of scholarly production: that mainly means producing articles and books, usually in print. But Jennifer's pedagogical practice and recent, pressing conversations in the field about ethics and public relevance encouraged her to reconsider what it means to be an ethno/musicologist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a result, she became more invested in community-engaged work and the Digital Humanities. She was particularly inspired by the work of those scholars interested in representing "content in a medium that is most proximate to the source of knowledge,"<sup>16</sup> including Steven Feld, an early advocate of doing "ethnographic work *in* and *through* the medium of sound."<sup>17</sup>

Because our philosophy of using digital platforms is the result of our experiences as a teacher-scholar and student-scholar, we should address the role of ethnographic research in the classroom. What can students learn from engaging with ethnographic research? How do the modes in which knowledge is disseminated affect the reception of that material? We begin by highlighting the experiences of Gabriela, who took classes with several ethno/musicologists, not just her co-author, during her studies. Reading ethnographic accounts, including traditional print books and articles, gave Gabriela the opportunity to engage with music in a multidimensional way, different from other kinds of music studies. As a student, her aim was to be able to hear multiple perspectives and diverse voices within an ethnography. Ethno/musicology courses exposed Gabriela to conversations

surrounding ownership, diversity, and inclusivity while helping her break away from colonialist ideas as to what practices are considered art or valuable.

Unless they come with a companion recording, however, books about a scholar's ethnographic research often do not provide a sonic experience for the reader. When Gabriela read ethnographies, she found it hard to internalize the arguments without sonic examples. She found it unfortunate that the very thing driving ethnographic research—i.e., the sounds—were often absent in or secondary to the finished product. As a teacher, Jennifer knew that the more accessible the materials, the better students learn. Students were more receptive to learning *about* sound when they could learn *through* sound. For example, when Jennifer teaches the history of sound recording, it helps her students to hear the graininess of a cylinder phonograph machine. Sounded examples contextualize information and bring the experience to life for the students. With their capacity to incorporate multimedia, digital platforms help all users—including students—to learn through those sensory experiences.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Digital Humanities is an approach to humanistic scholarship more than a particular set of tools or methods. As the grounding philosophy behind the design for *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*, it is worth outlining the approach. The best definitions are broad, like the following:

Digital Humanities refers to new modes of scholarship [...] Digital Humanities is less a unified field than an array of convergent practices that explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated.<sup>18</sup>

Digital Humanities, furthermore, is about “developing new forms of inquiry and knowledge production” while expanding

audiences for scholarship and redrawing traditional academic boundaries. It is equally important to clarify what Digital Humanities is not: it is not simply data put online, nor merely the study of digital artifacts.<sup>19</sup> For example, we have deliberately not used the term “digital ethnography” because it is typically used to mean the ethnographic study of digital life and virtual communities, such as YouTube, Facebook, and other social media platforms, or using digital tools to do ethnography, such as online interviewing.<sup>20</sup> Digital ethnography, then, is not about the way in which research is shared—our interest here. Digital ethnography could be shared through traditional print or through a digital platform. In the Digital Humanities, however, scholars harness digital tools to make discoveries and arguments not possible in more traditional print formats.<sup>21</sup>

We were particularly attracted by the capacity of Digital Humanities to offer new modes of knowledge production. This would allow us to make multimedia-rich ethnographic material widely accessible and bring users closer to the sensory world of *saluang* performance in Sumatra. But would we use an existing digital platform, or build one from scratch? Scalar is described by its creators at The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture as “Born-digital, open source, media-rich scholarly publishing that’s as easy as blogging.”<sup>22</sup> Jennifer decided to go with this pre-existing platform because it allowed her and trained students like Gabriela to do the bulk of the work themselves with no coding expertise. With the provision of a rich interface for multimedia display and text, interactive tools, and flexible structure, Scalar fit many needs of the project:

- Scalar is *multimodal*: this means it can represent the same knowledge through different modes, appealing to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners, in addition to those who learn best by reading.
- Scalar can incorporate a range of media, whether digitized analog or born-digital, such as photographs, documents,

audio, video, and interfaces with streaming media, such as YouTube and SoundCloud.

- Scalar has a *flexible, non-linear structure*. “Print,” Burdick *et al.* write, “typically offers a single viewing angle, linear organization, a research output characterized by finitude and stability, and a scale of documentation and argumentation that has to respect the physical proportions of the book.” Digital Humanities, in contrast, offers flexible, fluid scale, zoomable structures moldable to the project’s needs.<sup>23</sup> Designers have to create their own structures for a project’s interface, which can involve individualized, user-driven pathways of discovery.
- Scalar allows *collaborative design and authorship*: The “complexity and scale” of a Digital Humanities project means they are typically collaborative in nature, rather than the more traditional single authorship model of humanities. They also require participants with different kinds of expertise.
- Scalar easily *embeds digital tools*: These include—but are not limited to—Google Maps and TimelineJS, “an open-source tool that enables anyone to build visually rich, interactive timelines.”<sup>24</sup>
- Scalar is *accessible*: anyone with an internet connection can access projects built using Scalar and it has an adaptable interface for smartphones and tablets.

To test-run the capacity of the software in a lower-stakes environment, Jennifer adopted Scalar in a class where Gabriela was a student. We created a site called Sounding Decolonial Futures: Decentering Ethnomusicology’s Colonialist Legacies, which suggests some of the ways this technology can be adapted to pedagogical projects. That experience and the conversations about language, accessibility, and visual display shaped the design of *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*.<sup>25</sup> We now turn our attention to the project.

## A DIGITAL HUMANITIES PROJECT: *SONG IN THE SUMATRAN HIGHLANDS*

*Song in the Sumatran Highlands* takes advantage of Scalar to provide an innovative, interactive multimedia ethnography and archive that celebrates saluang. The site is an ethnographic archive in that it is a repository for still photography, audio, and audiovisual recordings collected over more than twenty years. But it is not just a static repository. It offers interpretation along with interactive tools that help users connect multimedia to context. The site is full of stories that address the meanings of this music in people's lives. By sharing lived experiences through multimedia, the site aims to bring users as close as possible to localized ways of experiencing saluang in the highlands of West Sumatra.

*Song in the Sumatran Highlands* makes two main contributions: that of the content and that of the medium. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first large-scale project in any language on saluang, arguably the most important vocal genre of the Minangkabau people. The genre is remarkable for a number of reasons, which are explored in the site: 1) the poetry of the texts involve an important form of oral literature that contains emotional depth, subtle allusion, and erotic sensitivity; 2) it engages geographic imaginaries to provide sonic manifestations of and affective attachment to place with repertoire and performers named for places of origin; 3) performances are important venues for socialization and reveal deeply gendered interactions between singers and their audiences; and 4) the genre has evolved considerably over the last fifty years, including the gender of the singers and the expansion of repertoire to incorporate pop material. These arguments could have been presented in a book with a linear format, but Scalar offered the possibility to re-envision the shape of the project. The interface was built and tools incorporated to suit the structural dimensions of the arguments and nature of the content presented.<sup>26</sup>



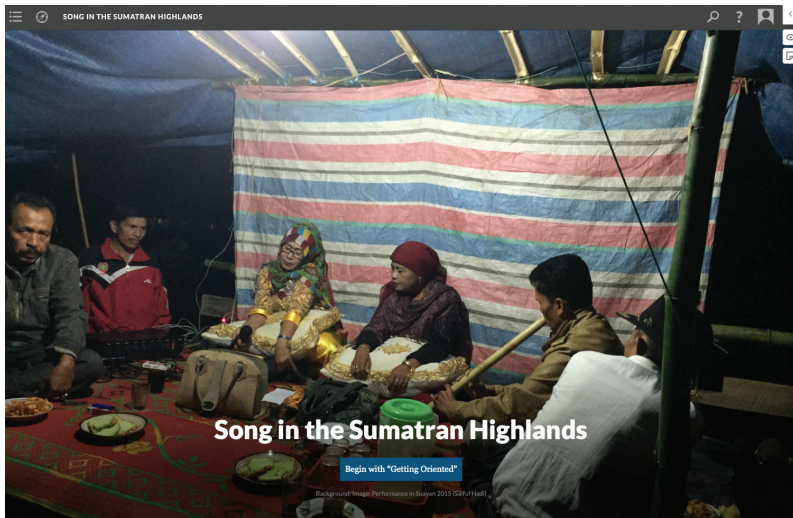
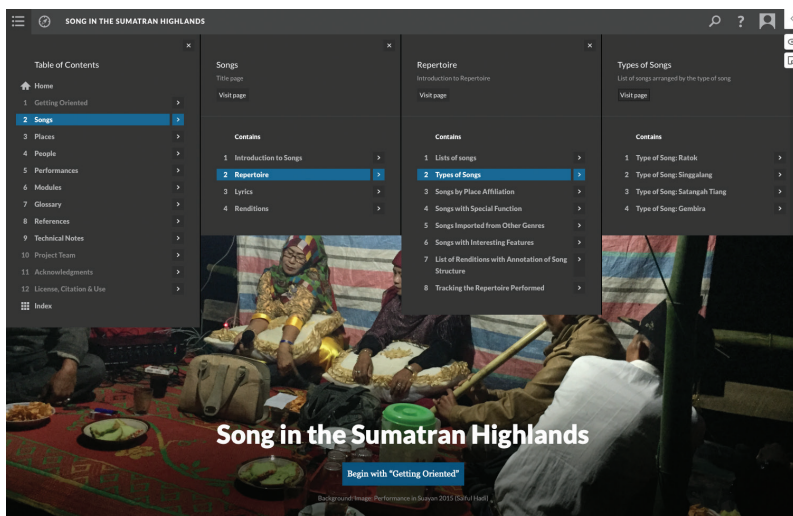


Figure 3. Landing Page, *Song in the Sumatran Highlands*.

The site is built around four important components of *saluang*: the *songs* that make up the repertoire, the *people* who perform or are devotees; the *performances* where songs are activated by people who perform and those who request specific songs; and the *places* connected to songs, people, and performances. This structure is reflected as the core part of the Table of Contents (see fig. 4 below). At the time of writing, the site, which like many Digital Humanities projects will always be in a state of evolution, lists 450+ song titles (see fig. 5), some 128 people, 19 performances or recording sessions, and 180 places. There are over 400 renditions of songs with nearly that many audio recordings, 30+ video recordings, and hundreds of images.<sup>27</sup> The site presents a number of interactive digital tools, including maps, timelines, network visualizations, and annotation of audio examples to allow users to learn song structures or find key features.<sup>28</sup>



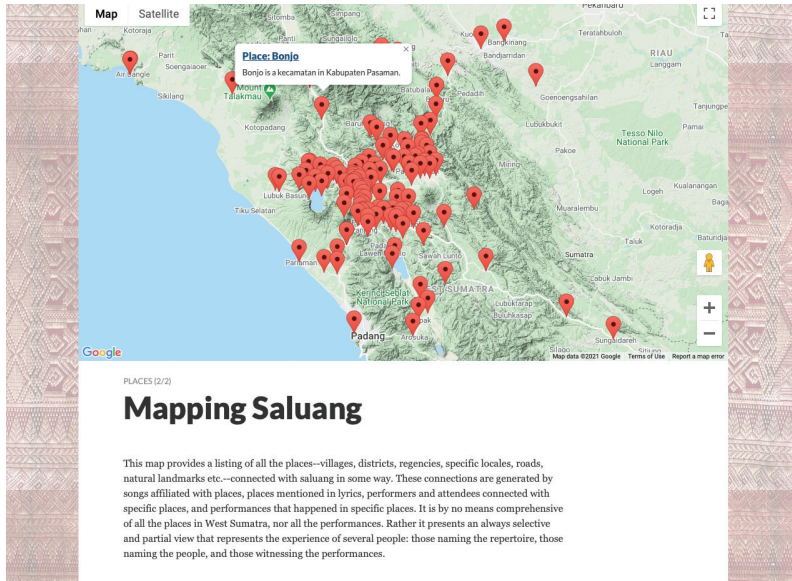


**Figure 4.** Table of Contents, which reveals major sections and possible pathways through them.

17	LISTS OF SONGS (2/3)	
18	<b>Te E's List of Songs</b>	
19		
20	The list of songs Te E shared with me in 2016 includes 233 titles. They are arranged into two labeled categories: Namo-Namo Lagu Daerah (Names of Regional Songs, meaning songs affiliated with specific places) and Lagu Satangah Tiang (Songs in the Satangah Tiang category), though many of these songs are also affiliated with specific places. On Te E's list, most of the songs are arranged by region, listed near others from the same place. Below, however, they are alphabetized for easy location. The spelling has occasionally been adjusted to account for the most standardized version of Minangkabau.	
21	1. "Aja Bangah"	
22	2. "Alai"	
23	3. "Alang Babega"	
24	4. "Ambun Pagi" (this song is listed here by more complete title as "Lawang Ambun Pagi")	
25	5. "Amin Urai"	
26	6. "Angpau Sarito"	
27	7. "Ampek Sejalan"	
28	8. "Anak Gubalo"	
29	9. "Antaran Dama" (this song is listed here by more complete title as "Koto Tuo Antaran Dama")	
30	10. "Apo Boleh"	
31	11. "Asau Lamo"	
32	12. "Balam jo Rantiang"	
33	13. "Banda Guntuang"	
34	14. "Banda Sapuluh"	
35	15. "Baruah Andiang"	
	16. "Baso Lamo"	
	17. "Batang Hari"	
	18. "Batang Komper"	
	19. "Batang Tabik"	
	20. "Batu Bata"	
	21. "Batu Bata"	
	22. "Batu Bata"	
	23. "Batu Bata"	
	24. "Batu Bata"	
	25. "Batu Bata"	
	26. "Batu Bata"	
	27. "Batu Bata"	
	28. "Batu Bata"	
	29. "Batu Bata"	
	30. "Batu Bata"	
	31. "Batu Bata"	
	32. "Batu Bata"	
	33. "Batu Bata"	
	34. "Batu Bata"	
	35. "Batu Bata"	
	36. "Batu Bata"	
	37. "Batu Bata"	
	38. "Batu Bata"	
	39. "Batu Bata"	
	40. "Batu Bata"	
	41. "Batu Bata"	
	42. "Batu Bata"	
	43. "Batu Bata"	
	44. "Batu Bata"	
	45. "Batu Bata"	
	46. "Batu Bata"	
	47. "Batu Bata"	
	48. "Batu Bata"	
	49. "Batu Bata"	
	50. "Batu Bata"	
	51. "Batu Bata"	
	52. "Batu Bata"	
	53. "Batu Bata"	
	54. "Batu Bata"	
	55. "Batu Bata"	
	56. "Batu Bata"	
	57. "Batu Bata"	
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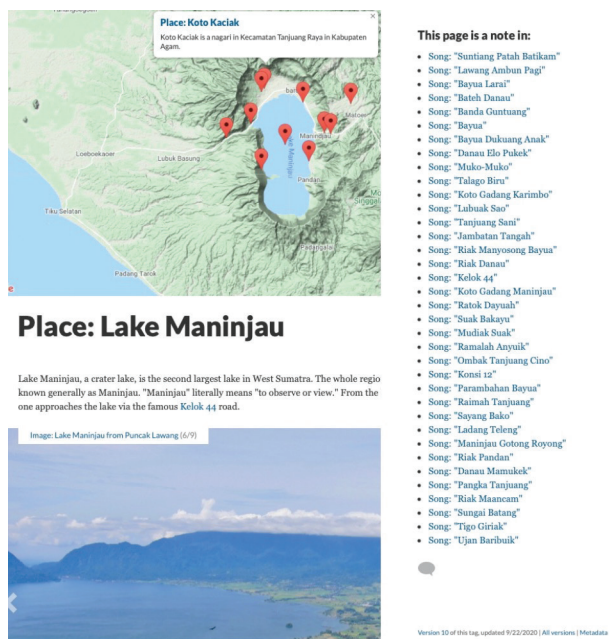
**Figure 5.** Example of a List of Songs. Te E is a well-known singer who kept her own list of songs in the repertoire.

The site maps place by tagging song titles, landmarks referenced in song texts, performers, and performances with geospatial metadata (latitude and longitude). This is represented on the Google Maps interface embedded in the software (see fig. 6). We use images to illustrate places wherever possible so that the user gets a sense of what it is like to be there (see fig. 7).<sup>29, 30, 31</sup>



**Figure 6.** Mapping Saluang. Each red pin represents a place that is geotagged. Clicking on the pin reveals a brief description of the place, along with providing a hyperlink to the place homepage, as indicated in the example of “Place: Bonjo.” The user can change the scale and the interface between plain map, terrain (recommended), and satellite.

The mapping element is important to this project because we are interested in the sonic manifestations of place. Jennifer was inspired by the work of Steven Feld, who explores how song

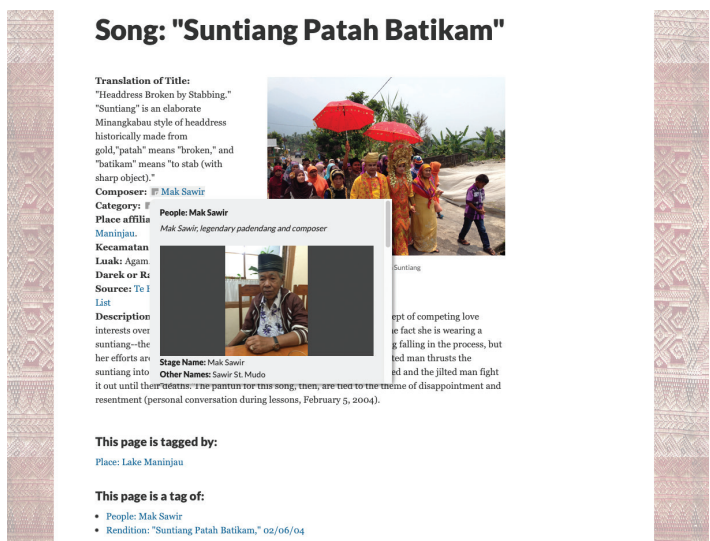


**Figure 7.** Example of a Place Page. This picture is a composite of some information that appears on the place page for Lake Maninjau. All place pages include an interactive map; lists of connected songs, people, performances, and other places; and images, where possible.

texts map trails through the rainforest,<sup>32</sup> and Angela Impey, who explores song routes constituted by women who sang as they walked, including shifting routes enforced by geopolitical borders.<sup>33</sup> Feld, however, does not offer visual maps to contextualize his argument, and Impey, who included maps, did not include sound to contextualize hers. In contrast, Scalar allows us to bring these elements together, linking sounds with place. In saluang, this linkage is important: many songs are named for or closely associated with specific places,<sup>34</sup> some performers are named for the village from which they come,<sup>35</sup> and song texts mention places. The interactive Google Map tool embedded throughout the site allows users to zoom in and out to see the landscape and

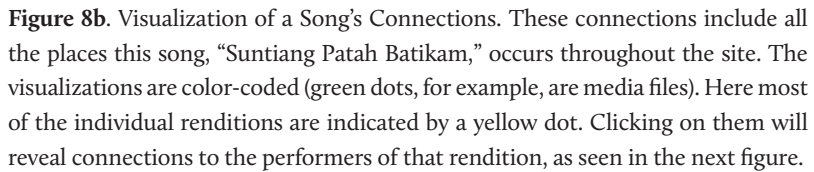
its topographical features, to understand the relative proximity or distance between places.

At one level our project is a response to an articulated community need: the documentation of the extant repertoire. Jennifer’s collaborators in Sumatra—performers and devotees alike—referenced the precarious nature of the genre with changing aesthetic preferences and social habits. She discussed building a digital archive with them. The site currently provides a database of song titles illustrated through audio examples but it functions as much more than a database (see fig. 8).<sup>36</sup>



**Figure 8a.** Example of a Song Page. Like pages for places, pages for songs build in visual material and hyperlinks to connected material where appropriate.

Song pages, like those of key performers, build in interactive visualizations, revealing the connections between a song, its renditions, and audiovisual examples, and connections to specific people, places, and performances. When users encounter a visualization like this, some connections will pop up:<sup>37, 38</sup>

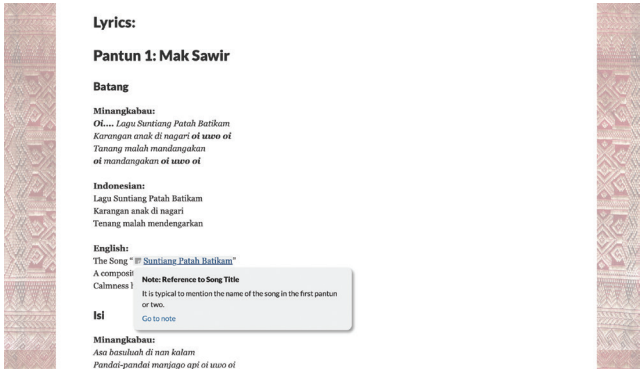


Users can trace the ways those songs are activated in performance and connected to places and particular people. They can see the texts for individual renditions of the songs, tracking changes from one performance to the next. Scalar allows the annotation of media with time markings so users can easily follow structural divisions (see fig. 9).<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 9.** Example of a Rendition of a Song. A rendition page includes the audiovisual media for that specific rendition, the list of performers, and annotations of song sections, enabling the user to appreciate the song structure.

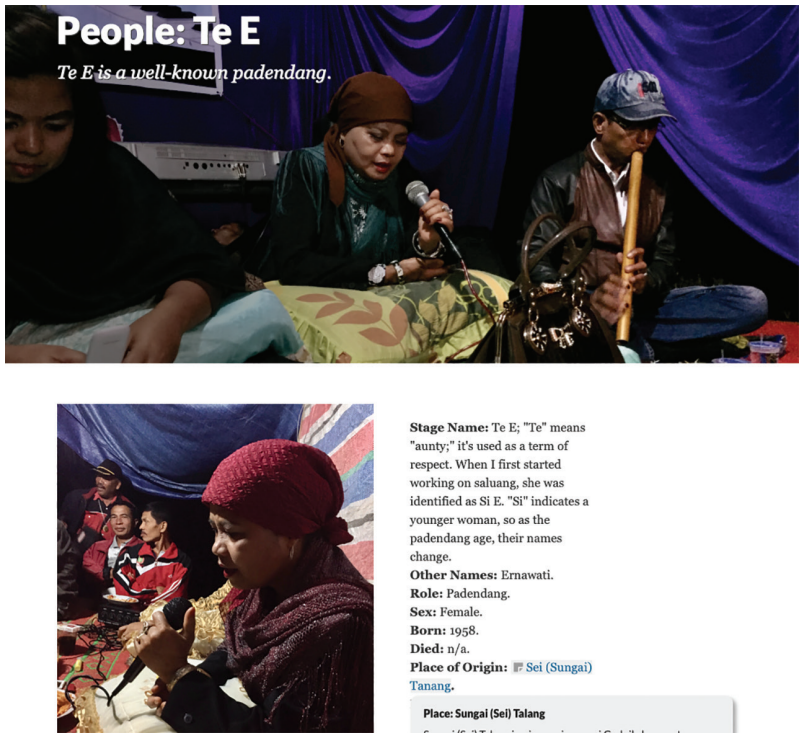
Scalar also allows the annotation of song texts, so that contextual information about translations can be included (see fig. 10). When those lyrics reference places, a map is included.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 10.** Example of Lyrics Layout with Annotations. The lyrics, where possible, are included under the audio example, often in three languages: the original Minangkabau, the Indonesian translation, and the English translation (enabled by the Indonesian translation).



Individual iterations of a song, like this rendition of “Sunti-ang Patah Batikam,” are connected back to the song’s homepage, allowing comparison of textual and structural differences between versions of the “same” song. For example, Jennifer recorded eleven different renditions of this song. Mapping the repertoire at individual performances Jennifer attended reveals the contours of the performance practice, which songs are most frequently performed, where, and when.<sup>41</sup>

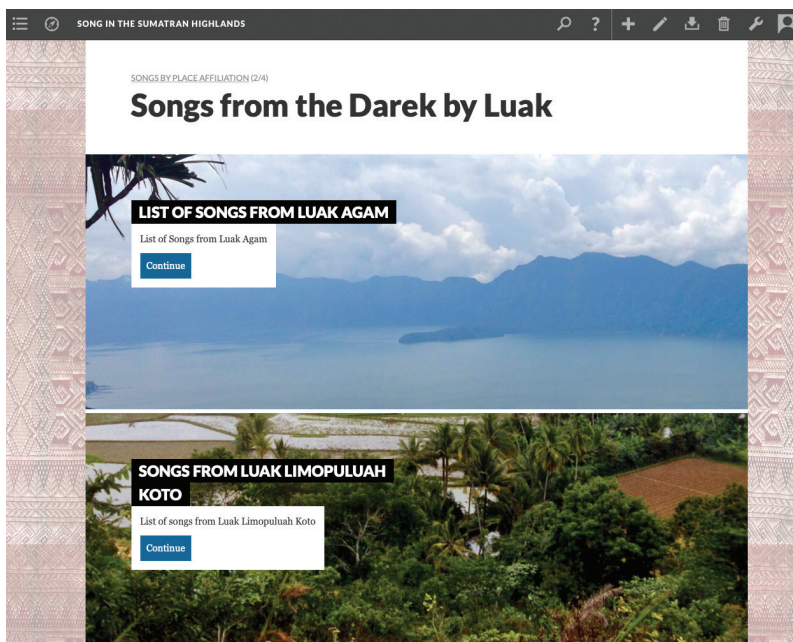


**Figure 11.** Example of a Page for a Person. The home pages for people include photographs, biographical details, songs they have composed, connections to performances Jennifer witnessed, and snippets of interviews with them.

The incorporation of visuals in the site allows the audience to put a face to the people who own and perform the music (see fig. 11). In the past, early ethno/musicological practices mislabeled, disembodied, and exotified the people they aimed to represent. While books often blur the lines between individual voices, Digital Humanities offer tools where practitioners can amplify the voices of marginalized peoples through media. Rather than having a scholar speaking for an individual in written accounts, digital platforms offer diverse ways in which people can tell their own stories about their music. The incorporation of images and snippets of interviews allows users to see the performers and hear their voices. This point is an important one. Rather than the voice of the ethnographer becoming the privileged one, it becomes one among many.

Digital platforms, which allow for such non-linear structures and multiple voices, offer the scope for decentralizing authority, or what Ramella calls the de-hierarchization of knowledge.<sup>42</sup> We have not tried to create a digital book here, something to be read through chronologically from start to finish, but something very different. Users of the site will be able to navigate through individualized pathways: for example, they could opt to trace out iterations of a particular song or follow specific performances, performers, or places (see fig. 12). After an introductory module that grounds the user in the basics, the interface is designed to allow for multiple entry points and intersecting pathways for engaging the material.<sup>43</sup> By allowing users to follow individualized pathways they become co-creators in the knowledge formation. Each user will discover unique connections, not just those laid out by site designers and content creators. The design also incorporates a section that provides modules for specific pedagogical purposes, so that the material can be adapted for classroom use.<sup>44</sup>





**Figure 12.** Example of a Visual Pathway. Each element of the pathway, here the different luak (regions), is illustrated with a picture. Clicking on the link will take you to the next page in the pathway.

Part of the appeal of a digital site is the capacity to provide multilingual access. Jennifer was inspired by Jennifer Kyker's site, *Sekuru's Stories*,<sup>45</sup> which includes sections in the original Shona language. While *Song in the Sumatran Highlands* is being built in English first, a later phase plans to incorporate Indonesian-language sections, ensuring greater access for members of the saluang community.

Most significantly, the affordances of the digital—meaning the tools and the interface that allow users to explore the material—enable new conceptualizations of the data.<sup>46</sup> These affordances reveal different ways of aggregating and seeing the data than would be possible in print. For example, Scalar also offers a rich array of tools for modeling and visualizing relationalities in data, including tag clouds, tree diagrams, and timelines (see fig. 13).<sup>47</sup>



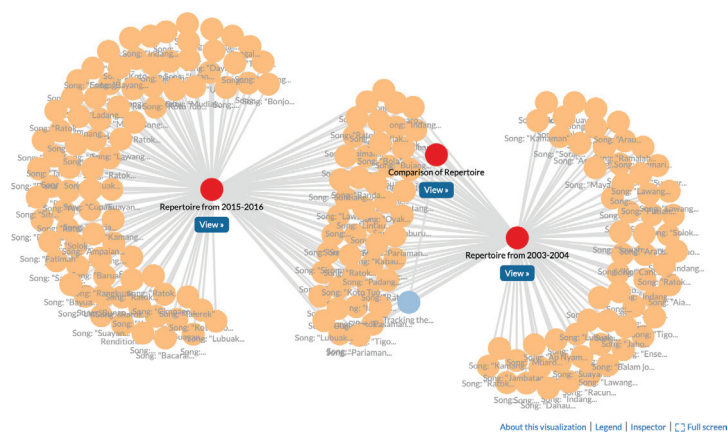


Figure 13, continued.

Another critical tool we deployed was an interactive timeline. This was Gabriela's brilliant idea to represent the structure of performances. This tool allows users to scroll through a performance to see how it unfolds over time, including how long songs lasted and when breaks occurred. It shows what kinds of songs were performed when (see fig. 14).<sup>48</sup>

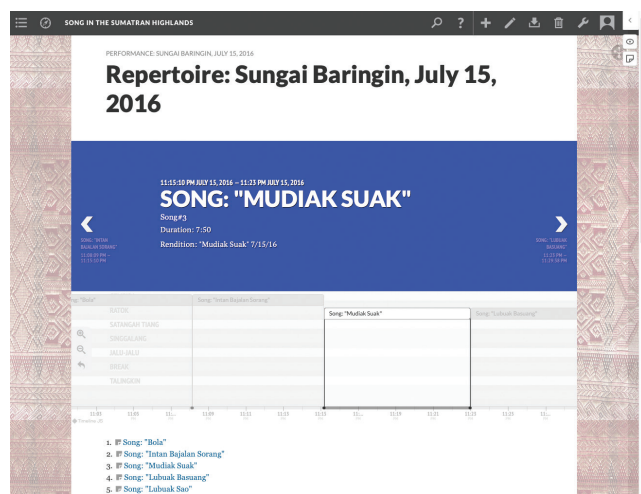


Figure 14. Example of an Interactive Timeline. You can scroll or click through the timeline of a performance to see the individual songs, which are presented according to locally relevant categories.

As Gabriela suggests, presenting scholarship digitally allows for the project and its data to breathe and evolve. One can revisit narratives, make changes, and allow for the project to morph over time. Indeed, since starting to build the project, Jennifer had the idea that she could work with scholars in West Sumatra to incorporate their archival photos and recordings into the site, presenting an accessible repository for important cultural history. She could also invite other scholars to contribute independently authored modules. In short, this digital platform and the tools it can incorporate, such as maps, timelines, visualizations, and annotations, radically enhance scholars' abilities to tell our stories, present our arguments, and engage broader audience bases.

## CONCLUSION

In this essay, we have argued that the Digital Humanities offers a set of tools to help humanists, ethno/musicologists, and other ethnographers to tell their stories in compelling new ways that are accessible not only to the public but especially to the communities with whom we work. We have also modeled a faculty-student collaboration, both in designing and building the site but also in co-authoring this article. For Gabriela, working behind the scenes on the project revealed not only the complexities of conducting ethnographic research, but also the detail and care that is involved in sharing research. Most importantly, through the repetitive tasks of building individual pages and connecting content, she came to appreciate how deeply the material is intertwined and how this format allowed the data to come to life. For Jennifer, this was a first experience in the collaborative presentation of ethnographic research. It was revolutionary to have someone to bounce ideas off, including questions of design and framing of the material for a non-specialist audience.

We call for students and scholars to actively work towards diversifying academic practice, to insert love, care and passion into

all work. The Digital Humanities, including the project we discuss here, offers one possible path. Having digital tools at our disposal as scholars has enabled new possibilities to display research in a way that is presented in multiple modes where text is enhanced with sound and visual material.

We encourage our readers to collaborate with musical communities with the end goal of decentering dominant modes of knowledge production and dissemination, particularly in cases where music and people have been excluded and misrepresented in broader music curricula. By incorporating diverse ways of representing data, as creators of the site we were better able to center our partners' voices and what these practices mean to them. There is much work still to be done. We remain committed to challenging and dismantling dominant white modes of knowledge production in ethno/musicology and the music academy, changing not just who gets a seat at the table but what the table itself looks like.

We chose to adapt a Digital Humanities approach to our work because we believe providing access to ethnographic knowledge for the communities with whom we work and the public is not just necessary, but our ethical and moral responsibility. We firmly believe that engagement in such digital platforms and with the questions laid out here is useful beyond any particular project, course, or degree program. The Digital Humanities teaches tools for problem-solving, collaborating, and thinking about different modes of communication. We invite our student readers to prompt your faculty to engage in conversations, if they are not already, about the relative merits of presenting scholarly arguments in and through different media, whether that be for student work or in their own ethnographic practices.

As you explore music scholarship in ethno/musicology and other fields, we leave you with a series of questions to consider and discuss:

- How and why do scholars choose a particular medium through which to present their scholarly work? You might need to think about personal, societal, financial, and institutional reasons.
- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of different media, including Digital Humanities?
- Who is creating ethnographic or other Digital Humanities projects and for whom? How does the positionality of author(s) and audience limit the projects' scope and the medium chosen?
- What ethical questions about authority, voice, representation, and access can and should guide scholarly production?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Song in the Sumatran Highlands* and the research for it has been supported by a Summer Stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH): [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov). June–July 2020; Research Status from Oberlin College; an International Dissertation Research Fellowship from Social Science Research Council, 2003–2004; and a Presser Music Award for Graduate Students, Theodore Presser Foundation, 2003–2004. The arguments and opinions shared here do not reflect those of the granting bodies.

The authors would like to thank the other members of the project team, both those in the U.S. and those in West Sumatra, but especially Megan Mitchell for her guidance on the technology. We also thank the OAM editors, the anonymous reviewers, including student reviewers, and Kathryn Metz and her students in Introduction to Ethno/musicology at Oberlin who all read an earlier version of this article and provided informative feedback. Gabriela would also like to thank her peers in the Decolonizing class since they really enhanced her skills as we learned to use Scalar, Matthew Stoloff for being her second pair of eyes and cheerleader when she feels unable to write and express herself, and Fredara Hadley for fueling her passion for ethno/musicology during her first year at Oberlin.

## NOTES

1. The authors chose this term to acknowledge the increasing overlap and mutual interests of two fields—historical musicology and ethnomusicology—that some still consider distinct. It is not the objective of this article to engage those debates. See, for example, Stephen Amico, “We Are All Musicologists Now; or, the End of Ethnomusicology,” *The Journal of Musicology* 37, no. 1 (2020): 1–32, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1525/JM.2020.37.1.1>; Anna Schultz, “Still an Ethnomusicologist (for Now),” *The Journal of Musicology* 37, no. 1 (2020): 39–50, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1525/JM.2020.37.1.39>; Henry Stobart, ed., *The New (Ethno)musicologies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008).
2. For example, Ama Aduonum, “Ethnomusicology, Aye Kradow?” *Ethnomusicology* 65, no. 2 (2021): 203–20, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.65.2.0203>; Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvzpv6bb>; Robin Attas and Margaret E. Walker, eds., “Decolonizing Music Pedagogies,” *Intersections* 39, no. 1 (2019): 3–150.
3. For example, Rebecca Dirksen, “Reconsidering Theory and Practice in Ethnomusicology: Applying, Advocating, and Engaging Beyond Academia,” *Ethnomusicology Review* 17 (2012), accessed March 3, 2022, <https://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/journal/volume/17/piece/602>; Michael Frishkopf, “Popular Music as Public Health Technology: Music for Global Human Development and ‘Giving Voice to Health’ in Liberia,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 54, nos. 1–2 (2017): 41–86; Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
4. For example, Leon F. García Corona and Kathleen Wiens, eds., *Voices of the Field: Pathways in Public Ethnomusicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).
5. For example, Luke Eric Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Deborah Justice and Fredara M. Hadley, “Collaborative Fieldwork, ‘Stance,’ and Ethnography,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 47 (2015): 64–81.
6. For example, Chie Sakakibara, “Collaborative Reciprocity Revisited: Giving Back through the Community-Partnered Iñupiaq Music Heritage Repatriation Project,” in *Giving Back: Research and Reciprocity in Indigenous Settings*, ed. RDK Herman (Corvallis: Oregon State University, 2018), 109–27; Frank



- Gunderson, Robert C. Lancefield, and Bret Woods, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Repatriation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
7. Jennifer Fraser with Saiful Hadi, Gabriela Linares, Megan Mitchell, et. al. *Song in the Sumatran Highlands* (2021), accessed July 11, 2021, <https://songinthesumatranhighlands.com/song-in-the-sumatran-highlands/index>. The page, “Project Team,” outlines the roles of different contributors: <https://songinthesumatranhighlands.com/song-in-the-sumatran-highlands/contributors>.
  8. For examples, see Samuel Araújo and members of the Grupo Musicultura, “Conflict and Violence as Theoretical Tools in Present-Day Ethnomusicology: Notes on a Dialogic Ethnography of Sound Practices in Rio de Janeiro,” *Ethnomusicology* 50, no. 2 (2006): 287–313; Beverly Diamond with Aaron Corn, Frode Fjellheim, Cheryl L’Hirondelle, Moana Maniapoto, Allan Maret, Taqralik Partridge, John Carlos Perea, Ulla Pirttijärvi, and Per Niila Stålka, “Performing protocol: Indigenous traditional knowledge as/and intellectual property,” in *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, vol. 2, ed. Jennifer Post (New York: Routledge, 2017), 17–34.
  9. Naila Ceribašić, “Musings on Ethnomusicology, Interdisciplinarity, Intradisciplinarity, and Decoloniality,” *Etnološka tribina: Godišnjak Hrvatskog etnološkog društva* 49, vol. 49 (2019): 3–39, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.15378/1848-9540.2019.42.01>.
  10. See Samuel Araújo, “From Neutrality to Praxis: The Shifting Politics of Ethnomusicology in the Contemporary World,” *Musicological Annual* 44, no. 1 (2008): 13–30, esp. 14–15, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/MuzikoloskiZbornik/article/view/3105>. For recent discussions around issues of ethics, positionality, and challenges in ethnographic research see Catherine M. Appert and Sidra Lawrence, “Ethnomusicology beyond #MeToo: Listening for the Violences of the Field,” *Ethnomusicology* 64, no. 2 (2020): 225–53, <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.64.2.0225>; Kay Kaufman Shelemay, “Ethnography as a Way of Life,” *Ethnomusicology* 64, no. 1 (2020): 1–18, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.64.1.0001>; and Ama Oforiwa Aduonum. “Walking as Fieldwork Method in Ethnomusicology,” *Ethnomusicology* 65, no. 2 (2021): 221–58, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.65.2.0221>.
  11. Timothy Rice, “Conducting Research,” in *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27–43.



12. Note that Te E is not included in the image. This is deliberate. When Jennifer interviewed women at home, they were often in their house clothes and without headscarves, as they would appear to members of their household, not members outside it. In other words, they were not dressed for public appearance.
13. Philip Yampolsky, *Night Music of West Sumatra: Saluang, Rabab Pariaman, Dendang Pauah* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways, 1994). SF40422, CD.
14. We deliberately use the word “collaborator” in this article in order to move away from older formulations, like “informant” and “interlocutor” in order to recognize and suggest that the researcher works collaboratively in the field with people. These people are as integral to the research process as the researcher.
15. The volume edited by Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) explores this and other shadows we leave in the field.
16. W.F. Umi Hsu, “Ethnography Beyond Text and Print: How the digital can transform ethnographic expressions,” *Ethnography Matters* (Dec 9, 2013), accessed March 3, 2022, <http://ethnographymatters.net/blog/2013/12/09/ethnography-beyond-text-and-print-how-the-digital-can-transform-ethnographic-expressions/>. See also Steven Feld, *Voices of the Rainforest* (The World Series, Rykodisc 10173, 1991, CD); Steven Feld and Donald Brenneis, “Doing Anthropology in Sound,” *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 4 (2004): 461–74; and David W. Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana María Ochoa Gautier, and Thomas Porcello, “Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology,” *Annual Review Anthropology* 39 (2010): 329–45, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/371465/original/Samuels%252C+Meintjes%252C+Ochoa+and+Porcello+-+Soundscapes--Toward+a+Sounded+Anthropology.pdf>.
17. Feld and Brenneis, “Doing Anthropology,” 461, emphasis added.
18. Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp, *Digital Humanities*. (Boston: MIT Press, 2012), 122.
19. Burdick et. al. *Digital Humanities*, 122.
20. Liz Przybylski, *Hybrid Ethnography: Online, Offline, and In Between* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2020); Crystal Abidin and Gabriele de Seta, eds., “Doing Digital Ethnography: Private Messages from the Field,” *Journal of Digital Social Research* 2, no. 1 (2020), accessed March 3, 2022, <https://jdsr.se/ojs/index.php/jdsr/article/view/35>.

21. Burdick et. al. *Digital\_Humanities*, 125.
22. Accessed March 3, 2022, <https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/>.
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# MUSICAL SALONS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT: PLATFORMS FOR WOMEN'S MUSICAL AGENCY

By Rebecca Cypess

*To access all audio/visual examples referenced in this essay, please visit the open access version on Fulcrum at <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12714424>.*

*My work on women and musical salons in eighteenth-century Europe began from the perspective of a performer. Although I was trained as a historical keyboardist, my impostor syndrome had led me to give up playing for several years while teaching music history full time. In 2012, I applied for a position at Rutgers University, the job description for which called for a musicologist with an interest in the historical keyboard instruments and performance practice. When I began my new job, I needed to find a way back into performance.*

*Sara Levy (1761–1854) gave me a point of entry. I had read about Levy years earlier, and I turned to her now as an inspiration for a recital. Like me, she was a Jewish woman who had a strong interest in earlier music. I was fascinated by her role as a patron, collector,*

*and student of the Bach tradition. I knew that she hosted a musical salon, but the full implications of that practice didn't hit me until much later. I figured I would play a few of the pieces that she collected and call it a day. Instead, together with my colleague in the Jewish Studies Department at Rutgers, I dove down a rabbit hole that led to a conference, performances, published articles, a book of essays by scholars from a range of disciplines, and a commercial recording. This work ultimately pointed me to a much broader study of women and musical salons, some of which I present in this essay. The questions that motivated me as I began to think more broadly about musical salons were (1) how did the musical salon in eighteenth-century Europe give women a platform for expression and agency? and (2) how did the musical salon reflect and shape the experiences of women, especially in their musical practices?*

*For me, one of the most exciting aspects of this project has been the way that my work as a performer and my work as a scholar have gone hand-in-hand. While the subjective experience of performance today can't be taken as a stand-in for the experience of people from the past, I think that my experimentation with the repertoire and performance practices of eighteenth-century salons has raised a number of questions, challenges, and ideas that I would not have become aware of if I had limited myself to archival or other scholarly research. The result, I hope, is a new understanding of how some eighteenth-century women used the musical salons to influence their cultural environments despite limitations on their full participation in the public sphere.*

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Musical institutions changed dramatically in eighteenth-century Europe, as well as in the British colonies and the early United States. With increased social fluidity came the widespread emergence of amateur music lessons, public concerts by professional musicians, musical encyclopedias, and journals featuring musical scholarship and criticism. Through engagement with each of these musical

institutions, individuals from across the social spectrum defined themselves as educated, expressive, and sociable. As the power of the Old Regime to shape a cultural agenda began to recede, high-ranking birth was no longer the sole signifier of virtue. Education, refined behavior, and cultural accomplishment could stand in its stead.

While most of the institutions listed above—lessons, concerts, music journals—persist today, others have waned, and, as a result, their roles in eighteenth-century society and musical life are little understood. One among these is the musical salon—a regular gathering of artists, intellectuals, professional and amateur musicians, and listeners, usually presided over by a woman who acted as hostess, or *salonnière*, who was often also a musician herself. Salons of all sorts were instrumental in the formation and dissemination of knowledge and social practices in the second half of the eighteenth century. They formed a testing ground for ideas about politics, human relationships, literature, philosophy, science, and the arts. Salons were multi-media and multi-sensory, often featuring good food and drink; refined visual pleasures such as artwork, furniture, and fashionable clothing; and the sounds of music. Above all, they constituted a venue for the cultivation of polite conversation—an essential element in the formation of an enlightened “self.”

In earlier eras, salons had been more or less restricted to the aristocracy.<sup>1</sup> But as republican ideals came to the fore during the Enlightenment, the salon changed to accommodate them. Increasingly, salon hostesses sought to bring together individuals from different backgrounds and with different points of view, setting them in dialogue with one another in a well-regulated environment that valued both *politesse* and education. The seventeenth-century model of the salon spread, now appearing in London, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Madrid, and Philadelphia, among many other places. Local social customs, interests, and concerns were grafted onto the earlier model, and each salon reflected the distinctive tastes, ideals, and pursuits of its hostess.



As I will show, women were not just incidental to eighteenth-century musical salons, but crucial. In an age when women's place in the "public sphere" was hotly debated, women used the salon as a platform to gain an education and to exert agency over their musical environments. Situated in the home but distinct from the domestic sphere, musical salons relied on a form of expression—music—that was often associated with "feminine accomplishment." While some salon hostesses simply dabbled in music, others engaged in music in far more serious ways. *Salonnières* sometimes became performers, composers, and critics; they collected instruments and scores; arranged music to suit their own interests or abilities and those of their guests; brought together professional musicians and amateur listeners, critics, and patrons who helped to shape musical taste; and collaborated with professional musicians in the creation of musical practices and compositions.

In this essay, I consider musical salons between ca. 1760 and 1800, arguing that they constituted intermediate spaces between the public and private spheres—a position from which the *salonnière* exerted agency within her musical environment. I then present three case studies—the salons of Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy (1744–1824) in Paris, Marianna Martines (1744–1812) in Vienna, and Sara Levy (1761–1854) in Berlin—to show how individual salons reflected the artistic and social priorities of the women at their center. Through their musical salons, these three women found space for their own creativity and had profound impacts on the musical culture of the late eighteenth century. Following these three case studies, I offer a postlude that places them in a broader context.

## WHAT IS A MUSICAL SALON?

In eighteenth-century usage, the term "salon" referred primarily to a space—a living room or parlor where gatherings took place. It was only in the nineteenth century that the gatherings themselves

came to be referred to as “salons.” In English, an eighteenth-century salon gathering was called a “conversation,” “assembly,” “coterie,” “party,” or “rout”; in French an *assemblée* or *rouelle*; in Italian a *conversazione*; in Spanish a *tertulia*; in German they might be called a *Teetisch* (tea table) or *Akademie*; they might also simply be thought of—and referred to—as social visits with friends. The variety of words used to describe salon gatherings reflects the myriad purposes and characters that such gatherings took on. Given the inconsistency of the historical terminology, using the single term “salon” may seem problematic. However, I adopt it here because it highlights the continuities among these institutions across a wide geographic region, including Central and Western Europe as well as the British colonies in North America.<sup>2</sup>

For the past several decades, scholars have attempted to understand how eighteenth-century salons fit into the social landscape of the period. This period witnessed a general decline in the centralized power of the royal and aristocratic courts across Europe (the so-called *ancien régime*), and a concomitant rise in the social, cultural, and political influence of the “public,” which defined itself outside of—or in opposition to—those courts. With the rise of commercialization and the bourgeoisie, the central role of courtly life for the establishment of cultural norms was overtaken by public institutions such as mass media, coffee houses, and public concert life. For the social historian Jürgen Habermas, the salon was one of these public institutions; he viewed salons as “centers of criticism—literary at first, then also political—in which began to emerge, between aristocracy and bourgeois intellectuals, a certain parity of the educated.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, in some cases, education could now take the place of aristocratic birth, leading to the creation of a more heterogeneous, cosmopolitan elite that overlapped or, in some cases, replaced the aristocracy.

Yet Habermas’s work did not account for the distinct experience of women in the eighteenth century. Women’s participation in public life was curtailed by social norms that

saw them as best suited to the domestic sphere. For example, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was both a frequent guest at salons and a vocal critic of them, compared women who assumed a place in the public sphere to actresses who inappropriately commanded public attention by parading themselves across the stage. Rousseau wrote nostalgically about “ancient” times, when women restricted their lives to the home:

The ancients had, in general, a very great respect for women, but they showed this respect by refraining from exposing them to public judgment, and thought to honor their modesty by keeping quiet about their other virtues [...]. With us, on the contrary, the most esteemed woman is the one who has the greatest renown, about whom the most is said, who is the most often seen in society, at whose home one dines the most, who most imperiously sets the tone, who judges, resolves, decides, pronounces, assigns talents, merit, and virtues their degrees and places, and whose favor is most ignominiously begged for by humble, learned men.”<sup>4</sup>

Rousseau’s disparaging description of women who hoped to shape public taste makes it clear that he would prefer women to remain silent on such matters. Indeed, historian Joan Landes argues that, from its inception, “the bourgeois public is essentially, not just contingently, masculinist.”<sup>5</sup>

Historian Dena Goodman’s foundational account of the so-called “Republic of Letters” revolutionized notions of the public sphere through a gendered reading. Her interpretation built upon Habermas’s association of the salon with the public sphere, but Goodman centered the narrative squarely within the domain of women—especially within the salon. She characterized the eighteenth-century salon as “the social base of the Enlightenment Republic of Letters: a regular and regulated formal gathering

hosted by a woman in her own home which served as a forum and locus of intellectual activity.”<sup>6</sup> Goodman argued that the salon was a space where the aristocracy and the literate intelligentsia met to lay out a new agenda of education and reason. Crucially, these meetings were governed by women, who imposed the social order cultivated during the Old Regime onto the discourse of enlightened philosophers.

Subsequently, however, Antoine Lilti questioned the understanding of salons within the public sphere, arguing that they “functioned according to a dialectic of openness [...] and closure. As a privileged space for female action, the salon differed from the public sphere, without being reduced to the realm of domesticity and family space.”<sup>7</sup> This understanding of the salon as an intermediate space, bridging the public and private, is, I argue, essential to the study of salons with a musical agenda, because of the strong association between women and domestic music-making in eighteenth-century Europe and colonial North America. Generally denied access to systematic, formal education, women encountered obstacles to engagement with the intellectual movements of the Enlightenment; even *salonnières* gained education through unsystematic means, including conversation with their guests. However, women’s cultivation of musical talent was socially sanctioned as a practice denoting “accomplishment”—one suitable for the feminine, domestic realm.<sup>8</sup> In music-making in particular, then, women were especially poised to mediate between the private and the public spheres. This is not to say that their status as authoritative figures in music—or as *authors*—went unchallenged, and indeed, some musical *salonnières* adhered willingly to social norms that discouraged them from seeking overt public recognition. Nevertheless, musical *salonnières* often pressed at the limits of these social norms, consciously entering the public sphere through public performance, published composition, or another authoritative status.

Drawing on the arguments of Habermas, Goodman, and Lilti, I argue that the musical salon was neither fully private nor fully public. Instead, it existed in an intermediate space between the two. Most guests were invited, or, in some cases, would accompany an invited guest to the gathering. Those who were privileged to attend, enticed by the multi-sensory pleasures afforded by the salon experience, gained access to an exclusive circle that formed a site of experimentation with social, cultural, and intellectual activities. Although *salonnières* were circumscribed by limitations associated with their gender, they often pressed against the boundary between public and private, exerting their influence in ways that extended beyond their own domestic spheres.

There is no clear line separating musical salons from other types of salons, so I define the musical salon broadly as one in which the *salonnière* had a particular interest in or talent for music, and in which she exercised those interests and talents by singing, playing, listening, and discussing music with her guests—activities often supplemented by the collection of scores and instruments or by the acts of arrangement and composition. As I will show, these activities allowed *salonnières* to exercise their agency and assert their ideals in ways that have gone largely undetected in music historical studies until now.

## IN THE SALON OF MADAME BRILLON

When the music historian Charles Burney left his native England in 1770 to collect information for his *General History of Music*, one of the first stops he made was at the home of Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy. Madame Brillon, as she was known, lived with her husband and daughters in the village of Passy, then near Paris, now part of the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. Born into a wealthy family and married to a well-connected financial

officer of the crown, she hosted a salon that was frequented by professional musicians from Paris and across Europe, as well as leading diplomats and other dignitaries. By the time of Burney's visit, she had already acquired a reputation as a keyboardist and composer. Burney remarked on both these roles, as well as the other sensory pleasures offered by her home:

Madame Brillon in person is rather pretty, but in her manner charming—polite, easy, and always naturally chearful [sic]. There was a good deal of company at dinner which was excellent and *bien servi*. After coffee we went into the music room where I found an English pianoforte which Mr. Bach had sent her. She played a great deal and I found that she had not acquired her reputation in music without meriting it. She plays with great ease, taste, and feeling—is an excellent sightswoman, of which I was convinced by her executing some of my own music. She likewise composes and was so obliging as to play several of her own pieces both on the harpsichord and piano forte accompanied with the violin by M. *Pagin*, who is reckoned in France the best scholar of Tartini ever made.<sup>9</sup>

Burney's description points to Brillon's strong network of musical connections. It was Johann Christian Bach (the youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach) who had arranged for her to receive her English "square piano" (fig. 1)—the instrument that she had included in her portrait by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (fig. 2), and for which she wrote a great deal of music. Her circle included the professional violinist André-Noël Pagin, who frequently played chamber music with her. Further connections to professional musical circles are confirmed by the number of composers who dedicated published works to her, including Johann Schobert, Ernst Eichner, Henri-Joseph Rigel, and Luigi Boccherini—all composers of foreign origin who lived or spent time in Paris.<sup>10, 11</sup>



**Figure 1.** English square piano by Johannes Zumpe, 1767. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments.



**Figure 2.** Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Portrait presumed to be Anne-Louise Brillon de Jouy, ca. 1769. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Brillon also welcomed amateur musicians and non-musical guests to her salon. Benjamin Franklin was her neighbor and frequent guest between 1777 and 1785, when he was leading the American delegation to the French government. Franklin had already established himself as a dabbler in musical inventions; his glass armonica, based on earlier uses of “musical glasses,” was already widely known in Europe, and he gave one of these instruments to Madame Brillon.<sup>12</sup> Some of his many letters to and about Brillon describe the music that he heard in her home.<sup>13</sup>

As Burney noted, Brillon was a composer, although, in keeping with her high social standing, which made public scrutiny undesirable, she never published her work. Her compositions survive, but more people know of them than have actually heard them.<sup>14</sup> They reflect the specific milieu of her salon—a circumstance that is only natural, since she wrote them for herself, her daughters, and her friends to sing and play. Perhaps her most unusual compositions are her duos for piano and harpsichord together, as well as her trios designated explicitly for German piano, English piano, and harpsichord, all three of which she owned. These pieces reflect her interest in collecting novel musical instruments as well as her interest in the various timbres of those instruments.<sup>15</sup> This interest in timbre is evident, for example, in the second movement of her duet in C minor for harpsichord and piano, in which she instructs the harpsichordist to play *avec la sourdine*—with mutes applied to the strings—thus creating a lute- or harp-like quality. The piano, meanwhile, plays a lyrical melody (see Example 1 below and Audio Example 1 on Fulcrum).

Brillon’s interest in timbre is also evident in the many songs that she composed, in which the qualities of the English square piano are on full display. That her square piano was the intended destination for these songs is clear from her many instructions to apply the damper-raising pedal, which blurs the sound of the instrument to create a dreamy, ethereal effect. Burney noted that Brillon applied the damper-raising mechanism of her piano



Andante

Pianoforte

Harpischord

avec la sourdine

1

4

8

**Example 1.** Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy, Duet in C minor for harpsichord and piano (probably intended for her English square piano), movement 2, mm. 1–12.

liberally—too much, in fact, for his taste: “I could not persuade Madame B. to play the piano forte with the stops on—*c’est sec*, she said—but with them off unless in arpeggios, nothing is distinct—’tis like the sound of bells, continual and confident.”<sup>16</sup>

Given that Brillon’s compositions were never published, it might seem counterintuitive to imagine that she used her salon to shape her musical environment. Indeed, in one of her letters to Franklin, she stated overtly that her compositions served a strictly private purpose. As she wrote, “I am a woman, and my lot and my taste are modesty; I have a lively mind, and nothing prevents me from using it, but only for myself and for my most intimate friends.”<sup>17</sup> It seems from this letter that she accepted the notion that women belonged in the private sphere, out of the public eye. How, then, might we imagine her exerting her agency and ideas in such a way that they affected her wider musical environment?

An answer presents itself in Luigi Boccherini’s sonatas for keyboard and violin, opus 5, published in Paris in 1768 with a dedication to Madame Brillon.<sup>18</sup> The text of his dedication states explicitly that these works were inspired by Brillon’s keyboard playing, and there is reason to think that this was more than a mere rhetorical trope. He wrote,

Madame, I have never before composed for the keyboard; I heard you play on that instrument, and then I wrote these sonatas; the homage that I offer you through them is, simultaneously, a fitting tribute, and one of recognition; you have inspired them, and you embellish them.<sup>19</sup>

Leaving aside the usual flattery, this letter suggests that Brillon made real musical contributions to the composition of Boccherini’s opus 5 sonatas. As a string player without expertise in keyboard playing or writing, Boccherini would have relied on skilled keyboardists to help him develop an idiomatic approach to the instrument. We can readily imagine Madame Brillon playing Boccherini’s works, discussing them with the composer,

and providing feedback that would lead to revision. If this is the case, then we may understand her salon as a site of collaborative authorship. Thus, I argue, through Boccherini's published compositions, Madame Brillon's keyboard technique, distinctive tastes, and musicianship entered the public sphere.

## IN THE SALON OF MARIANNA MARTINES

Like Madame Brillon, Marianna Martines (fig. 3) apparently felt constrained to limit her presence in the public sphere. While Martines did not come from the aristocracy, her family was socially ascendant, and her brothers were knighted in the 1770s. Her family's social aspirations may have made it especially important that she fall into line with social conventions around women's modest behavior. Her adherence to these norms can be seen in the fact that she apparently published only two of her many compositions, with the rest remaining in manuscript, and that she limited her appearances in public concerts. Yet, despite her limited presence in the public sphere, she became the first woman to be inducted into the famed *Accademia filarmonica* of Bologna—an academy that included some of the leading composers of Europe from Arcangelo Corelli to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. This recognition attests to the wide reach of her compositions. I propose that, like Brillon, Martines used the platform of the musical salon, situated between the public and private spheres, to share her musical creativity without attracting unwanted scrutiny for her work as a composer.<sup>20</sup>

A major advantage in Martines's life as a musician was her family's relationship with Pietro Metastasio, the renowned poet and opera librettist. Metastasio had met Martines's father when they were both living in Naples in the 1730s, and Metastasio lived with the Martines family until his death in 1782. The nature of their relationship will probably never be clear, but there is no question that the children of the family benefited from Metastasio's connections and guidance. It was probably Metastasio who helped Marianna's brother Joseph secure a position as librarian at the Imperial court.



**Figure 3.** Anton von Maron, portrait of Marianna Martines. Wien Museum Inventory no. 158.809.

Numerous documents attest to Metastasio's strong influence on Marianna Martines, including an autobiographical sketch that she sent to the head of the *Accademia filarmonica*, Padre Giovanni Battista Martini, in 1773, following her induction to the academy. In this sketch, she explained that she had received her early training in keyboard playing from a young Joseph Haydn, who was then living on another floor of the same house in Vienna where the Martines family resided. She connected herself to the Neapolitan school of composition, claiming Giuseppe Bonno, who had trained under Francesco Durante and Leonardo Leo, as her teacher. She noted that she had also studied the music of Handel, Hasse, Jomelli, and Galluppi, among others. "But," she wrote,

in all my studies, the chief planner and director was always, and still is, Signor Abbate Metastasio who, with the paternal care he takes of me and of all my numerous family, renders an exemplary return for the incorruptible friendship and tireless support which my good father lent him up until the very last days of his life.<sup>21</sup>

When Martines did publish two of her early sonatas, she apparently worked to mitigate the risks of negative attention that she might gain from such an entry into the public eye. The sonatas appeared in a series titled *Raccolta musicale contenente VI. sonate per il cembalo solo d'altretanti celebri compositori italiani messi nell'ordine alfabetico co' loro nomi e titoli* (“musical anthology containing six sonatas for solo keyboard by various celebrated Italian composers, placed in alphabetical order with their names and titles”). In fact, not all the composers lived or worked in Italy. It was evidently the style of the keyboard pieces contained in the anthology—in the brilliant yet technically accessible idiom associated with the Neapolitan galant school—that qualified these works and their composers as “Italian”; the names and titles were rendered in Italian to match.

It is significant that Martines is apparently the only composer in these two volumes who did not hold a professional post. Haffner identifies her as “Signora Maria Anna Martines, Dilettante a Vienna.” The term “dilettante” (“one who takes delight”) was one that Martines would apply to herself again later in the 1760s. A substantial two-volume manuscript of her Italian cantatas and arias, dated 1767 and now held in the library of the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella in Naples, bears the title *Scelta d'arie composte per suo diletto*—“Choice Arias Composed for Her Own Delight.”<sup>22</sup> Martines apparently described herself as a “dilettante” so that she would be understood as an amateur, and not someone whose social situation required her to earn a living through music.

While some of Martines’s music was performed publicly during her lifetime, her primary platform for the performance and presentation of her compositions were the salons, known in German as *Akademien*, that she hosted in her home, where visitors from all over Europe gathered to hear her. Such gatherings also held the promise of conversation about music and the other arts with both Martines and Metastasio. When Charles Burney visited Vienna for two weeks in 1772, he was introduced to both of them and spent several evenings conversing with them.

Although Burney's praise of Martines's singing, keyboard playing, and compositions is hyperbolic, it resonates with the way that Martines and Metastasio both described their aesthetic goals. Burney lauded Martines for achieving "a most agreeable *Mescolanza*, as Metastasio called it, of *antico e moderno*; a mixture of the harmony, and contrivance of old times, with the melody and taste of the present."<sup>23</sup> Her surviving compositions indeed suggest that she sought to combine the virtuosity that could be heard on the operatic stage with the perceived simplicity of the older composers whom she cited as her models. Listen, for example, to the multi-movement cantata "Berenice, che fai?" (Audio Example 2 on Fulcrum). Her recitatives are direct and highly dramatic. In the first aria, "Non partir, bell'idol mio," she sets the text in the simplest way, ensuring that every word could be heard and understood. In the second aria, "Perché se tanti siete" (Example 2 on Fulcrum), the text is first rendered in the same clear, syllabic way. Only after the first iteration of the text does she increase the vocal passagework that might obscure the sound of the words.<sup>24</sup>

After Metastasio's death, Martines moved to a more fashionable area of Vienna and began hosting a musical salon in her home each Saturday night. Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld counted her among the numerous hostesses (and hosts), mostly from the middle class and lower nobility, whose salons featured the best performances:

Fräulein von Martines. Every Saturday there is a very grand social gathering [*Gesellschaft*] at the home of this skillful musician, at which a great deal [of music] is always sung and played on the *Flügel*. On these days, one also sometimes finds here a wind ensemble that plays through the entire evening.<sup>25</sup>

Schönfeld's description makes it clear that Martines's tastes—especially the mixture of the "ancient" and "modern"—remained unchanged: "She reads at sight, accompanies from the full score,

**Table 1.** Text and translation of “Berenice, che fai?” Translation by Marco Meijdam in Lisa Larsson, Jan Willem de Vriend, and Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, *Ladies First! Opera Arias by Joseph Haydn* (Challenge Classics CC7622, 2013).

<i>Recitativo</i>	<i>Recitative</i>
Berenice, che fai? Muore il tuo bene, stupida, e tu non corri? Oh Dio! Vacilla l'incerto passo; un gelido mi scuote insolito tremor tutte le vene, e a gran pena il suo peso il piè sostiene. Dove son? Qual confusa folla d'idee tutte funeste adombra la mia ragion? Veggio Demetrio: il veggio che in atto di ferir... Fermati! Vivi! D'Antigono io sarò. Del core ad onta volo a giurargli fè: dirò che l'amo; dirò...	Berenice, what are you doing? Your beloved is dying and you, daze, do not run? Oh God, my uncertain steps vacillate; a cold unfamiliar tremor shakes my veins, and only barely can my feet sustain my body. Where am I? What confused crowd of sad thoughts darken my reason? I see Demetrio: I see him about to wound me... Stop! Live! I will be Antigono's. Despite my heart I rush to swear fidelity to him; I will say I love him; I will say...

<p>Misera me, s'oscura il giorno, balena il ciel! L'hanno irritato i miei meditati spergiuiri. Ahimè! Lasciate ch'io soccorra il mio ben, barbari Dei. Voi m'impedite, e intanto forse un colpo improvviso...</p> <p>Ah, sarete contenti; eccolo ucciso. Aspetta, anima bella: ombre compagne a Lete andrem. Se non potei salvarti potrò fedel... Ma tu mi guardi, e parti?</p> <p><i>Aria</i></p> <p>Non partir, bell'idol mio: per quell'onda all'altra sponda voglio anch'io passar con te.</p>	<p>Woe is me, the day grows dark, the sky flashes! My intended lies have angered it. Alas! Let me help my love you cruel Gods. While you keep me here, perhaps a sudden blow...</p> <p>Ah, you will be pleased; here he is, dead. Wait, fair soul: Let us go to Lethe together. If I was unable to save you, at least I will faithfully... But, you see me and leave?</p> <p><i>Air</i></p> <p>Do not leave my love: across the waves to the other bank I want to go with you.</p>
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(Continued)



Table 1. continued.

<i>Recitativo</i> Me infelice! Che fingo? Che ragiono? Dove rapita sono dal torrente crudel de' miei martiri? Misera Berenice, ah, tu deliri! <i>Aria</i> Perché se tanti siete, che delirar mi fate, perché non m'uccidete, affanni del mio cor? Crescete, oh Dio, crescete finché mi porga aita con togliermi di vita l'eccesso del dolor.	<i>Recitative</i> But what, in my unhappiness, am I imagining? What am I thinking? Where am I being abducted By the cruel torrent of my agony? Unhappy Berenice, you are delirious! <i>Air</i> Why, if you are so numerous that you make me rave, don't you kill me, emotions of my heart? Increase, oh God, increase Until you can offer me help By taking away life's Excessive sadness.
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and is an excellent singer. Rigorously correct in composition and execution, her taste is largely after the older Italian style.”<sup>26</sup>

Music and sociability merge in numerous other accounts of Martines’s salon in these later years. The English traveler Hester Lynch Piozzi describes Martines as one of Vienna’s “ladies of fashion [...] eminent for their musical abilities,” and reported that she “set [Metastasio’s] poetry and sing it very finely, appearing to recollect his conversation and friendship, with infinite tenderness and delight.”<sup>27</sup> Michael Kelly, the Irish tenor who sang in the Viennese opera buffa between 1783 and 1787, was likewise a regular guest in the Martines salon. A memoir attributed to Kelly describes Martines’ performances of keyboard duets with Mozart. The memoir further recounts that Kelly met Piozzi in Martines’s home, reporting that the two women “conversed with all around them without pedantry or affectation. It was certainly an epoch, not to be forgotten, to have had the good fortune, on the same evening, to be in the company with the favourites of Metastasio and Dr. Johnson; and last, not least, with Mozart himself.”<sup>28</sup> In all these descriptions of Martines’s salon, it is a sense of musical sociability and collaboration that dominates. This sociability, cultivated from the platform of her salon, allowed her to gain recognition for her work while adhering to the social limitations of her day.

## IN THE SALON OF SARA LEVY

In contrast to Brillon and Martines, Sara Levy (1761–1854; see fig. 4) was apparently not a composer. Yet, through the musical salon that she hosted in her native city of Berlin, she had a profound impact on her musical environment. Levy was a Jewish woman, salon hostess, musical collector, patron, and performing musician whose long life spanned a dramatic period in German history. Although her family experienced discrimination because they were Jewish, they were wealthy and privileged in many respects. Sara and her

siblings received the finest educations available—appropriate, of course, to their sex—including unrivaled musical training. The only known student of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, eldest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, Sara was performing as a harpsichordist for family guests by the time she was a teenager, and around the time of her marriage in 1783, she began hosting a salon with musical performance at its center. Like other salons hosted by Jewish women, that of the Levy home brought together family and friends, artists and intellectuals, philosophers and socialites, Jews and Christians. Later on, she went still further, appearing in public performances as a concerto soloist at the *Sing-Akademie zu Berlin*, a bourgeois amateur musical society with both Jewish and Christian membership. Levy's activities as a performer are all the more remarkable since few aristocratic women of her time would expose themselves to a public audience.<sup>29, 30</sup>



**Figure 4.** Silverpoint engraving by Anton Graff of one of the Itzig daughters, probably Sara Levy, née Itzig (1786).

For some modern critics, Levy's activities as a performer, patron, and collector of music fulfilled the idealistic promise of the Enlightenment—especially the ideal of co-existence among religions. However, for many of her non-Jewish contemporaries, Jewish participation in music was unthinkable; Jews, these detractors claimed, were inherently *unmusical*, and this unmusicality was both evidence for and a result of their immorality and errant ways. Levy's connection to the Bach family highlights this tension—the legacy of J. S. Bach was fundamentally grounded in an orthodox, pre-Enlightenment Lutheranism colored by anti-Judaism, and his biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel, a close friend of W. F. Bach, included in his *General History of Music* (1788) a screed against modern Jews and their alleged unmusicality.<sup>31</sup>

Sara Levy apparently knew of these tensions and debates, yet she left no written verbal testimony concerning them. She apparently wrote no autobiography and no diary; all but a few of her terse letters are lost. What remains instead is the remarkable collection of some 500 musical scores that she assembled. Her collection did not appear by accident; she carefully curated it, inscribing each score with her name or stamping it with her *ex libris*. Levy partook of German music and made it part of her own experience. Her collection thus stands as a refutation of the claim that Jews were incapable of being musical. In donating the majority of her holdings to the *Sing-Akademie* starting around 1815, she rendered her collection part of the Prussian patrimony, and she inscribed herself—a Jewish woman—into that heritage. When her great-nephew Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy ignited the public “Bach revival” within the walls of the *Sing-Akademie* with his performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829, he was picking up on family tradition.<sup>32</sup>

Although Levy was not a composer, she transformed the music she played in her salon. One aspect of this musical transformation took place through the process of arranging compositions for the instrumentation that she used in her salon. Like Brillon and Martines, Levy played keyboard duos, and, like Brillon, she

is known to have used harpsichords and pianofortes together in duos. The style of the music that she played was, however, dramatically different from the one that dominated Brillon's salon. One set of works that she is known to have played in this instrument combination is the collection of six organ trios, BWV 525–530, by J. S. Bach. These works are heavily contrapuntal, in contrast to the lighter galant textures of the composers whose works were heard and played by Brillon. In Bach's work, two treble-range lines interact in complex counterpoint and thick figuration. When played on the organ, each of these two treble lines is executed by one of the organist's hands, while the bass line is played by the feet on a set of pedals. In the arrangement for keyboard duo, the two treble lines are taken by the right hands of the two keyboardists, and the bass line is played by both keyboardists' left hands. The piano–harpsichord combination offers a means of simulating the different timbres available on the organ in an instrumentation that reflects the context of Levy's salon, where there was no organ, but there were multiple stringed keyboard instruments (Example 3 below and Audio Example 3 on Fulcrum).<sup>33</sup>

That Levy would have used harpsichords and pianos together is suggested by another work that she apparently commissioned: the concerto for harpsichord, piano, and orchestra by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. Composed in 1788, this concerto was Philipp Emanuel's last composition. As demonstrated by her connection with the Bach sons and by her impressive collection of scores by Johann Sebastian Bach and his contemporaries, Levy was interested in both the musical past and the present.

While Levy was not a composer, her collection of scores, her patronage of composers, and her performances had a significant impact on her musical world. She helped to redefine the musical history of Prussia, forging a common cultural environment with music at its center in which both Christians and Jews could participate.

## CONCLUSION

The three case studies that I have explored in this essay offer a preliminary picture of the varied manifestations of musical salons in the eighteenth century, as well as a sense of their different interests and motivations. Indeed, each *salonnière* was unique, and the study of other *salonnières* would unearth an even wider range of performances of musical agency. There is no comprehensive list of musical salons in the eighteenth century, but notable figures who shaped their musical environments in ways that invite further study include the professional-class women Maria Cosway and Marie-Emmanuelle Bayon; the elite Philadelphia poet Elizabeth Graeme; the Spanish aristocrat Maria Josefa Pimentel, the Countess-Duchess of Osuna y Benavente; the painter Angelica Kauffman, who chose visual art over a career in music but continued to play and sing in her salon; the poet and Handel aficionado Anna Seward; and Anne Home Hunter, who hosted Franz Joseph Haydn in her salon, and whose poetry he set.<sup>34</sup> The musical salons of these and many other women form a thread that connects the priorities and practices of women across Europe and colonial North America, even as it articulates their differences and individuality.

Musical salons were both inviting and exclusive. Opening themselves to guests from the middle classes and aristocracy as well as the class of professional musicians, artists, and writers, musical salons nevertheless remained obscured from public view and widespread participation. In our own age, musical salons can be seen as problematic precisely because they were exclusive. The *salonnières* who hosted them often subscribed to ideas of class distinctions that grate on modern sensibilities of equity and inclusion. Salons were almost entirely inaccessible to non-white participants, although the songs and dance music of the Black British composer Ignatius Sancho suggest that Black musicians provided music for domestic social gatherings that might have

shared some practices in common with salons. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, musical education as a whole—especially among women—became a marker of status associated with practices of leisure. Hosting musical salons, along with the patronage and collecting that they required, demanded even more financial expense than simply taking music lessons and sharing one’s talents among friends. And yet, the practice of hosting musical salons became more widespread as the century progressed, with professional-class women engaging in the practice with increasing frequency. By the nineteenth century, musical salons spread still further, appearing in Russia and South America.

Understanding the institution of the musical salon helps elucidate aspects of the history of women in music that have, with some notable exceptions, been largely overlooked up until this point. The history of music in the second half of the eighteenth century is most often told as a history of *composition*; writers in past generations did not hesitate to pass judgment on works that they considered inferior to the works of great masters—especially those of the Viennese Classical school. Yet the “big three” of that tradition—Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven—were all reared within, and heavily influenced by, the experience of salons wherever they traveled and lived. As the portraits of *salonnières* offered here have begun to suggest, consideration of musical salons at the foreground of music history, rather than the background, helps to shed new light on every facet of music-making during this period. As a natural outgrowth of this reconsideration of the salon, the voices of the women who hosted and “governed” them emerge clearly. Women used these salons as vehicles for education, creativity, expression, and the exercise of their musical agency.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Catherine Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love: Seventeenth-Century French Airs* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), esp. chapter 7, “Salon Culture and the Mid-Seventeenth-Century French Air.”
2. On the problems with the salon terminology, see, for example, Antoine Lilti, *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–91.
3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991/R), 32.
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Lettre à M. d’Alembert,” in *Collection complète des oeuvres* (Geneva: 1780–1789), 6: 482–84, transcribed at accessed August 3, 2020, <https://www.rousseauonline.ch/pdf/rousseauonline-0029.pdf>. Translated in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D’Alembert on the Theater*, trans. with notes and intro. by Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 47–49.
5. Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 7. A more recent statement of Landes’s perspectives on these issues is in Joan B. Landes, “Public and Private: Public and Private Lives in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *A Cultural History of Women in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Ellen Pollak, vol. 4 of *A Cultural History of Women*, general ed. Linda Kalof (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 121–41.
6. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 91.
7. Lilti, *The World of the Salons*, 39. A recent study that treats the categories of public and private with respect to music is Edward Klorman, *Mozart’s Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 73–108.
8. The problematics of music as a domestic activity suitable for women of the eighteenth century are explicated in Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology, and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
9. Charles Burney, *Music, Men, and Manners in France and Italy 1770: Being the Journal Written by Charles Burney, Mus.D. during a Tour through Those Countries Undertaken to Collect Material for A General History of Music*,



- transcribed and ed. with intro. by H. Edmund Poole (London: The Folio Society, 1969), 19.
10. Accessed March 8, 2022, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/503820>.
  11. Accessed March 8, 2022, [http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car\\_no\\_t\\_frame&idNotice=10890](http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_no_t_frame&idNotice=10890).
  12. The glass armonica that Franklin gave to Brillon survives at the Bakken Museum in Minneapolis, Minnesota; a photo and description have been archived from the Bakken Museum's website and can now be found at accessed August 3, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070405115543/http://www.thebakken.org/exhibits/mesmer/glass-armonica.htm>.
  13. See, for example, his letter to William Carmichael, 17 June 1780, *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-32-02-0387>. Further on Brillon's relationship with Franklin, see Claude-Anne Lopez, *Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966).
  14. Brillon's compositions are catalogued in Bruce Gustafson, "The Music of Madame Brillon: A Unified Manuscript Collection from Benjamin Franklin's Circle," *Notes* 43, no. 3 (March 1987): 522–43.
  15. Other composers who wrote and published duets specifically designated for harpsichord and piano together were Henri-Joseph Rigel and Jean-François Tapray. In other instances, such duets were published with generic designations of keyboard instruments, so players could use whatever instruments were available to them.
  16. Burney, *Music, Men, and Manners*, 20.
  17. Anne-Louise Boyvin d'Hardancourt Brillon de Jouy to Benjamin Franklin, after November 14, 1780. French text at accessed August 3, 2020, <https://franklinpapers.org>. My translation.
  18. On dedications as aesthetic statements, see Emily H. Green, *Dedicating Music, 1785–1850* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019).
  19. Transcribed in Rudolf Rasch, "Description of the Sources," in Luigi Boccherini, *6 Sonate per tastiera e violino*, ed. Rudolf Rasch (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2009), xciii. My translation.
  20. Accessed March 8, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marianna\\_Martines,\\_Pupil\\_of\\_P.\\_Metastasio;\\_born\\_in\\_Vienna,\\_4th\\_day\\_of\\_May\\_1744,\\_Member\\_Academia\\_Filarmonica.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marianna_Martines,_Pupil_of_P._Metastasio;_born_in_Vienna,_4th_day_of_May_1744,_Member_Academia_Filarmonica.jpg).
  21. Translated in Irving Godt, *Marianna Martines: A Woman Composer in the Vienna of Haydn and Mozart*, ed. John A. Rice (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 22.

22. This two-volume manuscript is in I-Nc, Arie 417 A–B.
23. Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom*, 1:345.
24. Accessed March 8, 2022, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a3/IMSLP623292-PMLP657227-Martines\\_cahier.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a3/IMSLP623292-PMLP657227-Martines_cahier.pdf), pp. 78–97.
25. Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*, 71; translated in Godt, *Marianna Martines*, 195.
26. Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*, 41–42; translated in Godt, *Marianna Martines*, 199.
27. Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey, through France, Italy, and Germany* (Dublin: Chamberlaine et al., 1789), 1:533.
28. Michael Kelly [and Theodore Hook], *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly, of the King's Theatre, and Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Including a Period of Nearly Half a Century With Original Anecdotes of Many Distinguished Persons, Political, Literary, and Musical* (London: Colburn, 1826), 252–53.
29. Levy's salon, musical practices, and relationship to the Jewish community of Berlin have been explored most recently in the various essays in Rebecca Cypess and Nancy Sinkoff, eds., *Sara Levy's World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018). See also Christoph Wolff, "The Bach Tradition among the Mendelssohn Ancestry," in *Mendelssohn, the Organ, and the Music of the Past: Constructing Historical Legacies*, ed. Jürgen Thym (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 213–23; Peter Wollny, "Ein förmlicher Sebastian und Philipp Emanuel Bach Kultus": *Sara Levy und ihr musikalisches Wirken, mit einer Dokumentensammlung zur musikalischen Familiengeschichte der Vorfahren von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010); Peter Wollny, "Sara Levy and the Making of Musical Taste in Berlin," *Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (1993): 651–88; Christoph Wolff, "A Bach Cult in Late-Eighteenth-Century Berlin: Sara Levy's Musical Salon," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 58, no. 3 (2005): 26–39.
30. Accessed March 8, 2022, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sara\\_Itzig\\_Levy\\_Anton\\_Graff.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sara_Itzig_Levy_Anton_Graff.jpg).
31. See Rebecca Cypess, "Music Historicism: Sara Levy and the Jewish Enlightenment," *Bach Perspectives* 12, *Bach and the Counterpoint of Religion*, ed. Robin A. Leaver (2018): 129–51. On anti-Judaism in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, see Michael Marissen, *Bach and God* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

32. See Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
33. Accessed March 8, 2022, [http://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/4/49/IMSLP90656-PMLP152881-Triosonate\\_Nr\\_2\\_c-moll.pdf](http://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/4/49/IMSLP90656-PMLP152881-Triosonate_Nr_2_c-moll.pdf).
34. An excellent study of Anne Home Hunter is Sarah Day-O'Connell, "The Composer, the Surgeon, His Wife and Her Poems: Haydn and the Anatomy of the English Canzonetta," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (2009): 77–112. On Anna Seward, see Gillen D'Arcy Wood, "The Female Pensive: Anna Seward, Sociable Poetry, and the Handelian Consensus," *Modern Language Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2006): 451–77. I discuss Graeme and Kauffman (and, to a smaller extent, Cosway, Bayon, and Pimentel) in my book *Women and Musical Salons in the Enlightenment*. None of these studies is exhaustive, and all the subjects deserve further consideration.

RACIALIZED ORNAMENT  
IN THE EXOTIC MUSICAL  
IMAGINATION: REFLECTIONS  
ON FRAMING AND DECOLONIALITY

By Gurminder Kaur Bhogal

*To access all audio/visual examples referenced in this essay,  
please visit the open access version on Fulcrum at <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12714424>.*

*I have always been intrigued by ornamental patterns no matter how or where they occur. My eyes tend to follow decorative shapes as they emerge on bathroom tiles and rugs, in the forms of embroidery and prints on clothing, and in the designs of jewelry and tattoos. For me, these visual forms of ornament have a counterpart in sound: I love to listen to how musicians similarly use decorative techniques to create variety and expression: a little flourish here and there, a drawn-out glissando, a crisp acciaccatura, an indulgent appoggiatura. I've always felt that the right type and placement of decoration can transform the humdrum into the sublime.*

*As a young musician, I used to enjoy embellishing sixteenth-century dance melodies on the sopranino recorder in my Renaissance music ensemble. My teacher was very supportive and never complained about my zealous, high-pitched noodlings. It was only later, when I began to study the historical contexts of these dances more closely, along with eighteenth-century performance manuals and treatises, that I gained an insight into the controversies surrounding the use of ornament in Western aesthetics. Most shocking was the emphasis on restraint as a means of heightened expression. This made no sense to me given the relatively ostentatious visual and sonic worlds in which I operated, saturated as they were by color, texture, shape, and pattern. Less is more? No! More is more. This was, and remains, my mantra.*

*The topic of ornament stayed with me even after I moved from playing the sopranino recorder to the bass crumhorn (the ensemble needed someone who could read bass clef—or maybe they had had enough of my chirruping?). It was on the piano, years later, that I discovered the music of two composers whose style, to my ears, was also defined by a love for ornamental detail. The music of Debussy and Ravel became the basis of my research on the arabesque for my doctoral thesis, and I have pursued the contours of this ornament as they stretched across the fields of music, art, dance, sculpture, and fashion over the last twenty years. I have always relished the look and sound of ornament and became even more mesmerized by its visual and sonic appearances when I saw the myriad topics to which it was connected: orientalism, colonialism, symbolism, the portrayal of female bodies, and depictions of nature. We now perceive the first human efforts to create art in the form of wall paintings, or decoration for clothing and tools, as a primal urge for expression. I have tried to keep this in sight as I reflect on our continued needs to create and enjoy beauty.*

*Growing up in a Kenyan-Indian household, I was always surrounded by visual and sonic forms of ornament: large, East African*

*sculptures in wood, copper, and soapstone were complemented by the soothing vocal extemporizations of Sikh devotional music. The essay that I share with the readers of OAM is dear to me because this is the first place I have felt comfortable combining my twin passions for French art music and Indian classical music, and their cultural contexts.*

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Ornament is an object (such as a necklace); a creative act (like decorating a cookie); a critical concept (the margins, periphery, or frame); a way of organizing space (stained-glass windows adorn a cathedral); and an approach to seeing (hundreds of tiny dots articulate shapes in Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884/86)).<sup>1</sup> The term also refers to a range of musical techniques for decorating melodies through rhythmic variation, as well as through the addition of trills, appoggiaturas, acciaccaturas, mordents, turns, and the like.<sup>2</sup> In Western European aesthetics, ornament only finds meaning in relation to the idea of structure, and as such it is usually regarded as a non-essential feature that adds beauty and variety. Are sprinkles essential on your ice cream? No, but they contribute to aesthetic pleasure by creating visual interest while satisfying your tastebuds through their crunchy texture. In this way, the oppositional binary of structure (ice cream) and ornament (sprinkles) thrives on an imbalance of power. Through a focus on race and gender, this essay highlights longstanding biases against ornament by drawing attention to how it has been restricted to the frame through negative characterizations that draw on ideas about race, especially when tied to perceptions of the female body. I will use visual examples and musical excerpts from Western European classical and Indian classical traditions in exploring how ornament has been racialized in negative and positive ways.

## ORNAMENT AND/AS STRUCTURE

Drawing on a recent discussion by sociologist Jo Haynes, I would like to clarify that my observation of positive racialization is tied to a white identification of desirable qualities in differently raced music; that is, how white Euro-American listeners identify qualities that they admire and seek to learn from or emulate in music made by non-white musicians and composers.<sup>3</sup> In praising the unfamiliar traits of this music, listeners might undertake a form of self-critique and highlight ways in which their own music is deficient. For example, the white French composer Maurice Delage admired the complexity and subtlety of Indian classical music and spoke of how, in comparison, his “poor ear [is] accustomed to the almost artificial subtleties of [...] Western [occidental] polyphony.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, Delage engages in self-critique: he admires Indian classical music while drawing attention to his own impoverished listening skills, which he attributes to the relative unsophistication of Western polyphony.

My exploration of positive racialization re-considers the agency (expressive and structural potential) of orientalized sounds. I describe these sonic gestures as exotic because their purpose is to signal non-Euro-American cultures and places in an idealized way to audiences. Experiencing these exotic markers along the lines of an East-West binary (the “Eastern other – them” vs. the “Western self – us”) renders them inert and passive. In Puccini’s opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904), a young Japanese woman, Cio-Cio San, is regarded as little more than an insignificant decorative object by her American husband, Lieutenant Pinkerton; blinkered by the stereotype of a pretty, timid Japanese woman, he cannot see the depth of her character. If we view the boundary that separates ornament from structure as fluid, porous, and artificially contrived, then we can come to a more nuanced understanding of otherness that points to instances where self and other are intertwined in one another’s

histories and ways of being. This perspective empowers exotic sounds by showing how they resist stereotypes.

A privileging of ornament through sound and image offers a way to overcome the self/other binary in moving toward a space that invites intercultural mingling. The cultural theorist Homi Bhabha characterized this hybrid space in 1994 as the Third Space: “it is the ‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture [...] by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.”<sup>5</sup> Bhabha seeks to dissolve the us/them (structure/ornament; West/East) boundary by asking his readers to reflect on how notions of self and other complement one another when they are brought into contact.

Recent scholarship on global music histories and theories has begun to draw again on Bhabha’s concept of the Third Space. This idea is also relevant to my essay. The eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant spoke of good ornament as the type that stays within the periphery and doesn’t draw too much attention to itself (see the elegantly patterned border in Philipp Otto Runge’s engraving, “Morgen” (Morning), from the *Tagezeiten* (*Times of Day*, 1805).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, “bad” ornament breaks the frame through its unruly abundance. For this reason, it was typecast as seductive, dangerous, irrational, and “Eastern/other.” We see an example of this kind of ornament in Alphonse Mucha’s poster for *JOB* cigarettes (1898) in which the ornamental arabesques that delineate cigarette smoke, hair, and the woman’s body reach beyond the frame.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these negative associations, there has been a long history of creative figures who challenged the idea that an artwork can be considered harmonious and tasteful *only* if ornament serves to enhance the beauty of the structural image in two principal ways: either through subtle placement within the image (as with



the inclusion of jewelry in Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665)) or as facilitated by a frame or boundary.<sup>8</sup> As we see with Mucha, artists who questioned this philosophical ideal sought to explore the intermediary space (the Third Space) where decoration and structure connect in such a way that ornament can be viewed as inextricable from structure. Indeed, ornament can be experienced *as* structure. Along these lines, my essay explores how the centralization of exotic ornament pushes listeners and spectators to the curious position of the *inbetween space* from where they are drawn to engage with decorative abundance.

This mode of engagement is decentering in that it asks us to let go of hard-learned assumptions and expectations so that we can fully embrace the unfamiliar possibilities offered by an intermingling of structural and ornamental elements in the Third Space. The decorative perspective that I outline here also intersects with a decolonial mode of inquiry, which sustains this essay and gives attention to the contributions of marginalized beings, sonic gestures, visual objects, and ways of thinking.<sup>9</sup> By paying attention to peripheral elements and reflecting on how they dismantle and restructure the notion of center, the examples that I study help us work toward understanding the effects of colonialism on the practice and reception of indigenous knowledges (whose deep origins are tied to places, languages, rituals, and practices).

The impulse to decorate is a deeply human and deeply personal expression that can reveal much about cultural values and aesthetics, thereby bringing into proximity musical traditions and styles that otherwise remain isolated from one another. Seen in this way, ornament might emerge as an equalizer of sorts given how it speaks to the freedom of the human imagination. A consideration of ornamental processes and techniques encourages reflection on existing methodologies and their inherent biases even as they open up a possibility for engaging with other ways of learning and being.

## ORNAMENT AS OTHER

For the field of music studies, my focus on ornament offers a specific theoretical perspective from where we might start to imagine a flattening of hierarchies, particularly those that are inherent in the notion of a single canon. I call on Beethoven to help me demonstrate how musical gestures that might be perceived as marginal have the potential to heighten our sensitivity toward unfamiliar expressive behaviors. My choice of example is deliberate; although many students will hear mention of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* (1808) at some point during their studies, few will have the opportunity to notice and discuss how Beethoven's use of a single, ornamental flourish articulates a moment of structural and expressive importance.

How might a listener's experience of this opening movement be entirely re-configured were they to acknowledge the expressive power of the oboe cadenza (flourish) that brings the symphony to a temporary halt soon after the recapitulation (a return of the opening material in the middle of the piece)? Rather than dismiss this cadenza as a passing, extended embellishment, I, for one, resolve to hear how the oboe's improvisatory lyricism allows for an opportunity to untether oneself from an aggressively tonal teleology (that is, a determined, forward-reaching harmonic motion) and switch to a way of listening that is anti-teleological and entirely melodic, thereby aligning itself with an aesthetics of otherness. Martin Geck describes the oboe solo, quite rightly, as a voice "from another world"; he calls it an "exterritorial [foreign]" symbol (listen to Audio Example 1 on *Fulcrum* and focus on 4.19-4.42).<sup>10</sup> Impatient critics who want to get back to the business of sonata form have tended to describe this cadenza as a disruption or an interruption.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, however, they fail to acknowledge how it might alter the way we hear the rest of the movement or the entire symphony (or even other music outside of the symphonic realm).



Example 1. Score, Symphony No. 5 by Ludwig van Beethoven.

The ornamental demeanor of this exotically-flavored oboe melody situates Beethoven's symphony *in the world*. In fact, one might hear it as a musical "topic" that signals the exotic. This is conveyed through the specific combination of oboe timbre, meandering melodic motion, and the otherworldly manner in which it emerges, transforming as it does from a delicate countermelody to the strings into a fully-fledged vestige of humanity. The oboe's plaintive aria speaks to a yearning for freedom and escape from the relentless drive of the symphony's famous opening motif.<sup>12</sup> Ornament promises to edify in this symphony, and we should allow it to do just that by acknowledging its expressive contribution, no matter how fleeting.

In making my case for an ornamental perspective, I must place my musings on the decorative humanity of Beethoven into a broader aesthetic context. I find myself in strong agreement with the literary scholar Anne Anlin Cheng who explains that the ornamental "bears the traces of some of the deepest and broadest philosophical debates underpinning modernity. It is nothing less than the very battleground on which struggles over beauty, racial

and gender difference, and the boundary of the human are played.”<sup>13</sup> Much of my scholarly work has been devoted to examining these struggles,<sup>14</sup> and yet, I remain intrigued by the vast historical and global reach of the ornamental, manifesting as it does in a multitude of ways across media and genres, epochs and styles.

To this day, the human impulse to decorate continues to attract negative labels when it fails to conform to Western European philosophical standards of beauty and coherence. For example, a recent BBC news article covered the outrage sparked by the author Olivia Pierson who described Nanaia Mahuta’s facial tattoos as “ugly and uncivilised.”<sup>15</sup> As the first indigenous female Foreign Secretary of New Zealand, Mahuta’s decision to wear facial tattoos, *moko kauae*, speaks to a sacred tradition whereby decorative patterns tie individuals to their family lineages (other reasons for wearing a chin tattoo for women indicate rank and status). What strikes me most about Pierson’s remarks is how they replicate age-old anxieties about ornament, particularly when aligned with female bodies: a conspicuous presence of decorative detail is vilified as grotesque excess and as a sign of barbarism. Pierson’s rhetoric echoes centuries of bias against prominent ornament, which reaches back to the ancient Greeks as we see in Plato’s racialized criticism of excessive ornamentation and indulgence as Oriental, Asian, Asiatic, and despotic.<sup>16</sup> These biases run all the way through European colonial history and reach their zenith in the nineteenth century, particularly in the work and philosophy of two English designers, Owen Jones and John Ruskin, whose outlooks were intertwined with Europe’s larger colonial endeavors.

Both Jones and Ruskin used racial theories of decorative art to advance their various nationalist agendas. Jones trod the fine line that separates positive and negative racialization of ornament through his praise for imaginative designs and simultaneous association of over-ornamentation with “savage” instincts.<sup>17</sup> In the same vein, Ruskin elevated the beauty and truth of (relatively unadorned) European art by vilifying the decorative traditions

of Arabic and Indian art. Ruskin's viewpoint shows what I mean by histories of self and other as being intertwined; he needs the "other" (Arabic/Indian art) to make his point about European art being superior.<sup>18</sup> We should note that the dynamics that propel this intertwinement are one-sided in that they are articulated from the position of the self while the perspective of the other remains absent.

Moving into the twentieth century, one of the most outspoken critics on the topic of architectural ornament was the Austrian architect, Adolf Loos. In his essay "Ornament and Crime" (1908), Loos typecast Papuan tribal art as primitive and degenerate and, like Ruskin, he equated the notion of simplicity with intellectual strength:

I can accept the African's ornament, the Persian's, the Slovak peasant woman's, my shoemaker's, for it provides the high point of their existence, which they have no other means of achieving. We have the art that has superseded ornament. After all the toil and tribulations of the day, we can go to hear Beethoven or *Tristan*. My shoemaker cannot. I must not take his religion away from him, for I have nothing to put in its place. But anyone who goes to the *Ninth* and then sits down to design a wallpaper pattern is either a fraud or a degenerate. [...] Modern man concentrates his own inventive power on other things [other than ornamentation].<sup>19</sup>

Mention of Beethoven as providing access to the sublime for the enlightened European mind reads as especially striking today given the music theorist Philip Ewell's recent contentious characterization of Beethoven as "an above-average composer."<sup>20</sup>

There is another point that has an uncanny significance in our present day: Loos's conviction (echoing Jones and Ruskin) that modern progress is denied to cultures that harbor what he views as a superficial and childlike instinct for design and visceral pleasure. Even now, decorative excess continues to attract derogatory labels

within academia and other spaces.<sup>21</sup> Turning now to a discussion of music, I will consider how ornament (in the form of sonic gesture and visual embodiment) continues to resist Euro-American socio-cultural paradigms even as it is exploited, consumed, controlled, and marginalized by them.

I have often wondered how these paradigms assert themselves within the domains of music pedagogy and scholarship. In response to Ewell's recent call for reform in how music theory is taught and practiced, I ask: how might we "deframe and reframe" ornament in a way that resists systemic impulses to normalize through marginalization?<sup>22</sup> To this end, might ornamentation be studied as a theoretical and aesthetic principle whose historical development can be tied to colonial activity, for instance? Within this broad historical and cultural framework, can ornament be viewed from vantage points that extend its study beyond the narrow conventions of performance practice and into new spaces that celebrate its alignment with virtuosity and the cultivation of timbral and textural saturation? Are there intercultural connections that can illuminate the expressive role played by ornament—say, with *masenqo* music of Ethiopian lute players as studied by Cynthia Tse Kimberlin, or with Arabic improvisation as explored by Lois Ibsen al-Faruqī? Moving on to opera, how might the study and practice of coloratura foster dialogues with non-European traditions of virtuosity that similarly value techniques of extensive vocal extemporization? Today, might more singers be tempted to improvise ornament if they were in conversation with other vocalists for whom this is an intrinsic aspect of their practice and culture—say, in Indian classical music or in African-American pop ballads?<sup>23</sup>

Questions such as these can work toward acts of deframing and reframing because they challenge static ideas about what constitutes center and periphery, as well as the notion of theoretical divisions that aim to separate different types and traditions of knowledge from one another (epistemological boundaries). Al-Faruqī explains

that “ornamentation for the Arab artist [...] is not an addendum, a superfluous or extractable element in his art. It is the very material from which his infinite patterns are made.”<sup>24</sup> As I think about this observation in relation to ornament, I see an opportunity for decolonizing work: how might intercultural dialogue around specific techniques and practices encourage a new awareness and re-assessment of our instinctive reactions to music and sound? How can sensitivity toward ornamental expression teach us to pay attention to those subtle details that we have been trained to marginalize? How might these new observations engender a more egalitarian approach to thinking about music as an activity that finds expression through shared experiences, sensations, and aesthetic aspirations?

## APPROACHING DECOLONIAL INQUIRY THROUGH ORNAMENT

What would it look like to consider ornament from a decolonizing perspective? I begin with a short excerpt from George Frideric Handel’s opera *Giulio Cesare* (1724) in a 2005 production by David McVicar for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. In this scene, the soprano Danielle de Niese (who plays Cleopatra) is in disguise as her maid, Lydia, who performs a seductive aria for Julius Caesar, “V’adoro pupille.” Opera producers usually take full creative license at this moment. For their part, McVicar and de Niese draw on shiny ornament to literally dazzle and seduce Julius Caesar. Within this orientalized context, the *mudras*, Lydia’s hand gestures, which are appropriated from Indian classical dance, are emptied of their semantic content. Instead, a nonsensical conjugation of arm and hand movements highlight the seductive mischief behind Lydia’s disguised performance ([watch Audio 2](#) on Fulcrum).

In this way, McVicar and de Niese rely on longstanding stereotypes of ornamental excess as sensual, feminine, exotic, irrational, and mesmerizing. As a South Asian woman, I am

intrigued that de Niese, who is also of South Asian descent, should choose to self-orientalize. Drawing on Helena Liu's notion of "mythkeeping," I read this behavior as serving to "secure recognition under the white gaze" given de Niese's efforts to play into stereotypes in entertaining her audience.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, looking back at this role, de Niese explains on her website that it "catapulted [her] career to international superstar level, and [she] ended up signing a multi-album deal with Decca." The singer's strategic staging certainly seems to have increased her racial legibility in opera; to this day, she remains the sole high-profile soprano of South Asian heritage.<sup>26</sup>

Despite their good intentions, the efforts of McVicar and de Niese are not entirely innocent. They knowingly build on countless other moments that racialize ornament in sonic and visual representation, especially in the genres of exotic opera, ballet, and orchestral music. Let's also keep in mind the many portrayals that we consume on a daily basis in popular culture, film, video games, commercials, music videos, and more, where ornamental excess is engineered to signal exotic and erotic femininity. What does engagement with these kinds of representations reveal about *our* take on cultural and racial diversity, and sonic stylization? As with Julius Caesar, do ornamental exotic signifiers shut down our critical filters leaving us to greedily consume the visual and aural spectacle in an orientalizing manner? Or, resisting the blinding allure of ornament, are we able to contemplate how it functions and acknowledge its expressive significance while still appreciating decorative beauty?

I witness exotic objects as harboring the potential to resist the stamp of illegibility conferred by the white gaze, which also reinterprets these objects through recourse to stereotypes. Instead of learning the language of *mudras* and using them appropriately, McVicar reduces their significance to empty gestures that titillate rather than narrate. As Cheng explains below, when othered bodies, gestures, and sounds are experienced as more than historically static things and objects they accrue agency and defy translation



(into stereotypes such as the “erotic Eastern woman”). Cheng offers a way for thinking about the objectified exotic, which is pertinent for *Giulio Cesare* and many other such examples:

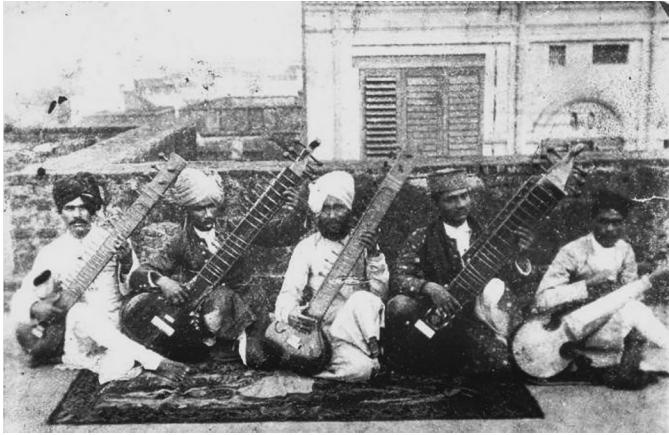
What we need, then, is not just an account of how Asiatic people have been used as things, or how Oriental things have influenced our uses of them, but instead a conceptual paradigm that can accommodate the deeper, stranger, more intricate, and more ineffable (con)fusion between thingness and personness instantiated by Asiatic femininity and its unpredictable object life.<sup>27</sup>

I will now explore Cheng’s idea in relation to Bhabha’s conceptual paradigm of the Third Space, both of which accommodate stylized Asiatic timbres in the ways outlined in this quotation. I turn to a song cycle by the French composer, Maurice Delage (1879-1961), who composed the *Quatre poèmes Hindous* following his trip to India in 1912. The song titles pay tribute to four of the cities that he visited: Madras (now Chennai), Lahore, Benares (now Varanasi), and Jaipur. For the public performance in Paris in January 1914, Delage scored this composition for mezzo soprano and chamber ensemble (string quartet with oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, piccolo, flute, and harp). The few scholars who have studied Delage’s song cycle tend to distance his musical stylizations from standard-fare orientalism (that is, music that imagines different cultures in an idealized way).<sup>28</sup> I also sense his modernist leanings given his decorative conception of the *chanson* (French lyric song) as conveyed through subtle timbral shifts, intricate rhythmic patterning, microtonal inflections, and cyclic temporal organization, all of which work together in providing a release from clearly articulated, goal-directed harmonic progressions.

As he traveled through India, Delage praised the complexity and sensitivity of the music that he heard in live performances and recordings; when writing about this music to his friend, the composer Igor Stravinsky, he exclaimed: “I will make you listen

to the Hindu records, a kind of music of which you have no idea.”<sup>29</sup> Delage was fascinated by the unfamiliar tuning systems of the instruments, while new vocal techniques and styles of ornamentation broadened his understanding of pitch, tuning, intervallic relationships, rhythm, timbre, and form. Despite his eagerness to notate this music, Delage struggled to make transcriptions. As discussed in my introduction, he mentioned his inability to capture that special “something that was beyond the notes with his poor ear accustomed to the almost artificial subtleties of [...] Western [occidental] polyphony.”<sup>30</sup> To Stravinsky, Delage confessed he was struggling to “find those Hindu sounds that send chills up my spine.”<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, his attention to techniques for sound production and timbral variation amounted to a positive musical attempt at racializing ornament, as we hear in the privileging of decorative elements and their destabilization of the ornament/structure boundary.

Let’s consider the second song of the cycle, “Lahore: Un sapin isolé” (“Lahore: An isolated fir tree”). While this song is set to a poem by Heinrich Heine, the first and fourth songs are set to stanzas by the ancient Indian grammarian and philosopher, Bhartrihari (from around 500 CE); the author of the poem used for the third song is anonymous. The musical material of “Lahore” is based on improvisations by Ustad Imdad Khan (1848–1920) (Example 3). Khan was a renowned player of the *sitar* and *sūrbahar* (bass sitar), and he established a school (or *gharāna*) called the *Etāwah Gharana*, which flourished from around 1858 to 1940 near Agra, India. He was the first musician to record on the *sitar* and *sūrbahar* for the Gramophone Company in Kolkata as early as 1904. Since Khan was influenced by *dhrupad* (a courtly) style of singing, his technique was characterized by vocal-style ornamentation that included the use of *taan* (rapid patterns of short motifs) and the use of *meend* (gliding between pitches, which Delage translates as glissando). We can hear these idiosyncratic features in Khan’s recording of *Rāg Jaunpuri Todi* for Gramophone, which Delage studied closely.



**Example 2.** Ustad Imdad Khan (1848–1920) (seated in the middle). Founder of *Etāwah gharana* (1858–1940).

Note the following before you listen to this recording: as we have seen with Ruskin and Loos, stereotypes of non-European ornamentation as irrational excess aligned decorative complexity with an absence of taste and judgment. However, as you will hear, Khan is especially sensitive to the type, quantity, variety, and placement of ornament. Listen closely for the *meend* (glissando) with which Khan opens this *rāg* as he moves from *ni* to *Sa*; listen also for the rhythmic strumming of the drone strings (called *chikāri*) in the octave above (in the *taar* [upper] register); and finally, keep an ear out for Khan’s exploration of microtonal inflections as he moves through the ascending and descending portions of the *rāg* (the *arohi* and *avrohi*). All these decorative techniques engage with aspects of pitch, rhythm, and timbre. Example 3 captures the overall sweep of the improvisation along a timeline for the opening phrase. This *rāg* is identified with the second *pahar* (period) of the morning; that is, from 9am to 12pm.

Delage wanted to replicate Khan’s masterful improvisation through the instruments of his chamber ensemble. The closest he could get to Khan’s *sūrbahar* was the cello, although the four strings of the cello are really no match for the 20-odd strings of the *sūrbahar* (counting those that vibrate sympathetically). Still,

Delage had the cellist tune the bottom two strings a semitone lower (so B and F# instead of C and G) to extend the range and to cultivate new resonances, which he tried to sustain through exaggerated vibrato. The use of copious sliding techniques in the cello mirror the *meend* (the glissandi) we hear on the *sūrbahar*, and emphasize microtonal movement. To compensate for fewer overtones and a less intense resonance on the cello, Delage draws on the entire chamber ensemble to emulate the sonorous richness of the drone and the multiple, interweaving motifs of Khan's improvisation. Sustained *pianississimo* woodwinds receive an extra timbral shimmer through the harmonics of the harp and violin. The resulting pointillism suggests an avant-garde tendency, but one that is firmly indebted to an older tradition of improvisation. As you listen, allow this passage to offer an *inbetween space* that speaks to Cheng's observation of a deep, strange, intricate, and ineffable intermingling of an exotic ornamental aesthetics (Audio 4 on Fulcrum and Example 4).

**Example 4.** Maurice Delage, “Lahore,” from *Quatre poèmes hindous* (Paris: Durand, 1914), mm. 1–13.

“Lahore” is also fascinating for the way that it pays tribute to the technique of closed mouth singing in the postlude (closing section). This technique was familiar to Delage from operatic choruses (in Leo Delibes’s opera *Lakmé* (1883), for instance), but it was the South Indian vocalist, Coimbatore Thayi, who really captured his imagination (Example 5).



**Example 5.** Coimbatore Thayi (Palanikunjaram) (1872–1917).

Coimbatore Thayi, whose received name was Palanikunjaram, was born in 1872 in Coimbatore (South India) into a renowned courtesan family. The name Coimbatore indicated her birthplace while Thayi was her nickname. Thayi’s mother (Venkatammal) was a respected singer and her grandmother (Visalakshi) a respected dancer. Coimbatore Thayi learned both music and dance but decided to pursue a career in singing shortly after she moved from Coimbatore to Madras during the 1890s.<sup>32</sup> Like Khan, she was singled out to make a record for Gramophone in 1908, and eventually went on to record around 300 discs for the company. As you listen to her now, pay attention to the ends of the phrases where her closed mouth singing merges with the *gamaka* (ornamentation) and sustained notes of the accompanying violin (listen to Audio 5 on Fulcrum, and listen closely at 0.16, 0.46, 1.19, and 1.51.).

Let's also see what this technique looks like. Here is a more recent recording by the renowned Carnatic singer, M. S. Subbulakshmi, who demonstrates the technique of closed mouth improvisation (watch Audio 6 on Fulcrum and pay attention especially at 0.50–0.52, 1.25–1.35, and 2.05–2.17).<sup>33</sup>

Delage tried to transcribe these vocal techniques in his postlude based on what he remembered from recordings and performances. However, the complexity of the music baffled him such that he openly borrowed some motifs from Lakmé's famous coloratura aria known as the "Bell Song" (from Delibes's opera, *Lakmé*). Listen also for textural and timbral parallels with a Carnatic ensemble given how the harp and strings meander closely around the soprano's melody much as the violin does for Coimbatore Thayi and Subbulakshmi. This performance by soprano Julia Bullock is particularly compelling given how she conveys the wide tuning and improvisatory feel of Thayi's *gamaka* (ornamentation) (Audio 7 on Fulcrum).

Khan and Thayi embody two opposing traditions: North Indian with Khan and South Indian with Thayi, also referred to as Hindustani and Carnatic. It's unusual to bring these distinct practices into proximity as Delage does in "Lahore," and perhaps his willingness to do so reflects a lack of cultural knowledge. Still, Delage's visit to India created within him a desire to convey the richness of his musical encounters. His renditions are considerably more refined and subdued than those of his predecessors, but his approach to stylization (distilling the music of a different culture) operates to some extent within an exotic (an idealizing) frame: the opening arabesque (meandering) melody in the voice; the delicate filigree of interweaving decorative motifs; frequently changing meters; ephemeral timbres; and modal emphasis are all musical markers of the Orient in the Euro-Western musical imagination. By filtering Delage's songs through the improvisations of Khan and Thayi, I want to stress how these formidable musicians shifted Delage's notion of center such that their practices allowed him to see the limitations of his inherited craft and the tools of his trade; that is, the musical instruments themselves. Indeed, in a

contemporaneous transcription of Thaiyi's singing in *Ragamalika* (1912–14), Delage went so far as to “prepare” his piano as observed by Jann Pasler; he asked the pianist to dampen the sound by inserting a piece of cardboard under the strings to approximate the percussive timbres of the accompanying *mridangam* (a double-headed drum used in Carnatic ensembles).<sup>34</sup> If only he had dared to venture further into the territory of prepared instruments.

Maybe, for Parisian audiences of the time, Delage had gone far enough. His privileging of decorative elements in these songs left some critics such as Paul Martineau scratching their heads at the premiere in January 1914. Wondering whether he had missed hearing the work altogether, Martineau confessed, “I must admit that after hearing Maurice Delage’s Hindu melodies, I was still waiting for the masterpiece announced!”<sup>35</sup> The refined abundance of Delage’s composition seems to have swept Martineau into *an inbetween space* as decorative elements seeped through the porous boundary to reconfigure the central musical structure. Martineau’s sense of disorientation corresponds with the intercultural jostling that occurs in Bhabha’s Third Space and in Cheng’s paradigm of ineffable (con)fusion. As the recorded improvisations of Khan and Thaiyi permeate his composition, Delage allows exotic object and personhood (Khan and Thaiyi’s voices and personalities) to occlude his own compositional voice to the extent that it exerts little presence (as confirmed by Martineau’s feeling of having missed hearing Delage’s songs). Even as the compositional voices of Khan and Thaiyi are implicated in the history of the *Quatre poèmes Hindous*, this composition remains a unilateral effort given how the self (Delage) facilitates intertwinement with the other (Khan and Thaiyi).

#### SUFI SEMA AND RAVEL’S *BOLÉRO*: THE INTERTWINING OF SELF/OTHER

In closing, I offer a brief example of how such a dynamic can be bi-directional, and the implications behind an intercultural,



collaborative listening. I turn to a contemporaneous piece by Delage's informal composition teacher, Maurice Ravel's famous *Boléro* (1928) ([Example 10](#)). The improvisational quality of *Boléro*'s ornamental melodies have tended to open up points of intersection with cultural practices ranging from Spanish *cante jondo* to Sufi *sema* rituals.<sup>36</sup> I have always found compelling a claim made by the Sufi scholar, Idries Shah, who argued that the tune known in the West as Ravel's *Boléro* is actually an adaptation of compositions used by the Mevlevi and Chishti orders of dervishes in their Sufi rituals.<sup>37</sup> Even though it is unlikely that Ravel experienced Sufi *sema* rituals firsthand, Shah's claim presents a wonderful inversion where the orientalized other (Sufi) seems to recognize the self within a stylized sonic stereotype. The Ravel scholar Arbie Orenstein also suggests something quite similar: "In Morocco, amid the exotic scales, quarter tones, and the wail of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer, Ravel was pleasantly surprised one day to hear a young man whistling the Bolero."<sup>38</sup> In line with Shah's comment, was it *Boléro* that Ravel heard, or something with an extemporized decorative aura reminiscent of his composition? I invoke Bhabha's formulation of hybridity and Cheng's observation of distorted borders along porous edges when I ask: what happens when we allow the Turkish *nay* and *kudum*, the flute and drum used in *mevleviye sema*, to meet the flute and side drum of Ravel's *Boléro* in a middle (Third) space? (Audio 8 on Fulcrum and [Example 6](#)).<sup>39</sup>

The image displays a musical score for Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system features a Flute (Fl.) staff with a melodic line marked '1<sup>st</sup> Solo' and 'pp' (pianissimo), and a Tambourine (Tamb.) staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system features a 1<sup>st</sup> Flute (1<sup>re</sup> Fl.) staff with a melodic line and a Tambourine (Tamb.) staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The music is in 2/4 time and G major, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

**Example 6.** Maurice Ravel, *Boléro* (Paris: Durand, 1932). Opening flute melody, mm. 1–8.



As teachers and scholars, we tend to brush off these kinds of anecdotal evidence as unreliable, but what if we allowed such observations and indigenous oral histories to unsettle our notions of center? For instance, can the impulse to learn more about the cultural contexts of *mevleviye sema* also inform our hearing of Ravel's *Boléro* along the lines of what al-Faruqī observes in Arabic ornamentation: “ornamentation [...] is [...] the very material from which [...] infinite patterns are made”?<sup>40</sup> Is this what a decolonial approach to hearing music might look like as we reposition what or who resides at the center and give credence to artistic practices that depend on and propel intercultural exchange? With this example, I show that the directional shift can be significant since it dismantles ornament/structure and self/other binaries to reveal something much more nuanced: how selves and others are both involved in shaping the terms of aesthetic discourse as they are woven into (and weave themselves into) histories of aesthetics.

The larger goal of this essay has been to show how the language of our field engages a rhetoric of the ornamental in an activist spirit: we speak of redressing structural imbalance, and of bringing marginalized and minoritized voices, bodies, and expressions into the center. One of the ways we can do this is by paying attention to what has been deemed ornamental: that is, individuals, practices, and ideas that have been rendered insignificant by epistemological methodologies (ways of approaching received ideas about what constitutes knowledge) and institutional frameworks. Intercultural exchange highlights how a decorative aesthetic can overcome the frame to thrive in and of itself. In drawing on ornament as a mode of social and theoretical engagement, I believe there is potential for decentering and reframing as we consider possibilities for new sensory experiences and ways of understanding. Moreover, this strategy offers a way to accommodate more voices and centralize their perspectives in a way that isn't compelled to downplay key

historical figures (such as the “above average” Beethoven, to go back to Ewell’s point).

The dynamics of interconnectedness that I explore have been the focus of methods described as relational, intersectional, integrative, and interdisciplinary by scholars and teachers.<sup>41</sup> Alongside the current interest in deframing and reframing, I see inter-epistemological approaches (those that allow for contact between different traditions and bodies of knowledge) as holding great promise because of how they acknowledge and draw on indigenous knowledge frameworks. I have tried to demonstrate this approach by centering oral traditions as the focal point for a consideration of repertoire study. I am aware that my critical slant has been one-sided; Coimbatore Thayi, for instance, wasn’t aware that her improvisations had been transcribed and adapted by Delage. In this respect, I have just scratched the surface in showing how we might bring contrasting musical epistemologies into proximity: Coimbatore Thayi’s voice and Khan’s sounds emerge as the source for Delage’s composition while Sufi *ney* improvisation shapes our perception of ornamental melodies in Ravel’s *Boléro*. My singular focus on ornament shows how decorative detail, a sign of human existence and of the imagination at work, is always present and ever-ready to combat insularity; think of how the exotic subject serves as a vestige of humanity in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony while a self-orientalizing corporeal vocabulary activates racial legibility in the production of Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*. I hope my attempt to deframe and reframe from the standpoint of ornament can initiate new dialogues with your own perspectives and experiences.

## NOTES

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10. Cited in Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven’s Symphonies: An Artistic Vision* (New York: Norton, 2015), 109 (original: Martin Geck, “V Symphonie in C moll Op. 67,” in Renate Ulm, ed. *Die Neun Symphonien Beethovens* (Kassel: 1994), 158). Also see Geck, *Beethoven’s Symphonies: Nine Approaches to Art and Ideas*, trans. Stewart Spencer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 97.
11. See, for instance, Raymond Knapp, “A Tale of Two Symphonies: Converging Narratives of Divine Reconciliation in Beethoven’s Fifth and Sixth,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (Summer 2000) 53/2, 302.
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30. "J'ai senti ce qu'il y avait par-delà des notes, avec ma pauvre oreille habituée aux subtilités presque artificielles de notre polyphonie occidentale." Delage, "Lettre de l'Inde," *Revue Musicale S. I. M.* (15 June 1912), 73.
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## SIXTEENTH-CENTURY POLYPHONY AND THE MODAL PARADIGM

By Megan Kaes Long

*I fell in love with music of the Renaissance in high school. I was an avid singer, and was familiar with the typical high school choir repertoire, but when a conductor put a piece of Renaissance polyphony in front of me, I was floored. I loved how each voice part got to sing beautiful melodic lines that wove in and out of the other voices. I'd never had that kind of independence before. And I loved how all the voices would come together for cadences, which somehow felt inevitable to me even though the harmonic language of the repertoire was so different from the music that I was more familiar with. That experience developed into a life-long love of singing Renaissance music, and a life-long obsession with understanding how it's put together, and why it sounds the way it sounds.*

*That obsession led me to an undergraduate degree in music, where I read everything I could find about "mode," which, as far as I could tell, was the Renaissance version of tonality. Then I went to graduate school and wrote a dissertation about this problem, and, subsequently, a book. But the more I investigated mode, the more puzzled I became. What seemed like a fairly straightforward system of scales, I discovered, was in reality full of twists and turns, and it was never quite clear to me*

*how modal theory really accounted for details on the musical surface of actual compositions. Mode, it turns out, is actually not very much like tonality at all! But the challenges, complications, and frustrations that modal theory introduces raise fascinating questions about the relationships between theory and practice in the Renaissance (and ever since)—questions that I am continuing to answer in my own work. This essay takes you on a fast-forwarded version of my own journey—it introduces modal theory, starts to explore how modal theory and compositional practice may or may not interact, and then considers some alternatives to modal theory for people who, like me, want to get their hands dirty with real music as soon as possible.*

*I originally wrote a version of this essay for my own students, who wanted to analyze sixteenth-century music using tools and vocabulary that would have been familiar to sixteenth-century musicians. Ultimately, the goal of this essay is not to unpack the whole long, complicated history of modal theory, but rather to identify some of the challenges, questions, and opportunities that sixteenth-century modal theory might present to modern students of this repertoire.*

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What gives the music composed in sixteenth-century Europe its distinctive sound? Consider these three compositions: a motet by Josquin des Prez written near the end of the fifteenth century, a mass movement by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina from the middle of the sixteenth century, and a motet by William Byrd composed near the end of the century. All three of these composers were masters of imitation. They designed elegant melodic lines that could overlap and unfold in all kinds of dramatic ways. And they all followed the basic rules of counterpoint—rules that governed how all the melodic lines fit together. But is there something deeper controlling the character of these compositions, shaping how they begin, how they unfold, where they ultimately come to rest?

In the sixteenth century, music theorists like Pietro Aaron, Heinrich Glarean, and Gioseffo Zarlino wrote hundreds of pages on the subject of mode: a system of scales, melodic formulas, cadential plans, and even emotional characters that, they argued, shaped the inner workings of the music of their day. But the modal theory they were devising was laden with twists and turns, contradictions and questions. And they didn't merely disagree on the details—whether it was a good idea to cadence on G in the Dorian mode, or whether C or D was an important secondary pitch in the Mixolydian mode. They disagreed on even more basic questions: how many modes there were, what they were called, what kinds of musical parameters they entailed. They even disagreed on what the modes were for, and whether every piece of music was in a mode in the first place.

Part of the problem was that modal theory originally emerged to describe music quite different from the sixteenth-century polyphony these theorists aimed to understand. In the Middle Ages, church musicians found it useful to group plainchant melodies according to their melodic characteristics—they adapted an older system of eight modes to classify these chants, largely according to their final pitch, range, and distinctive melodic patterns. But applying a system designed for monophonic music to a repertoire where multiple lines wove in and out of one another posed unique challenges for modal theory. In particular, each voice in polyphonic music has distinct melodic gestures and occupies its own range, suggesting multiple possible modal classifications. The challenge for sixteenth-century theorists, then, was to determine whether modal theory might be productively applied to contemporary music, and if so, how.

But redefining modal theory for sixteenth-century music was a formidable challenge indeed. Harold Powers, a contemporary musicologist who devoted his career to making sense of modal theory, illustrated the problem succinctly. Powers pointed out that if we asked any three musicians today to identify the key of a

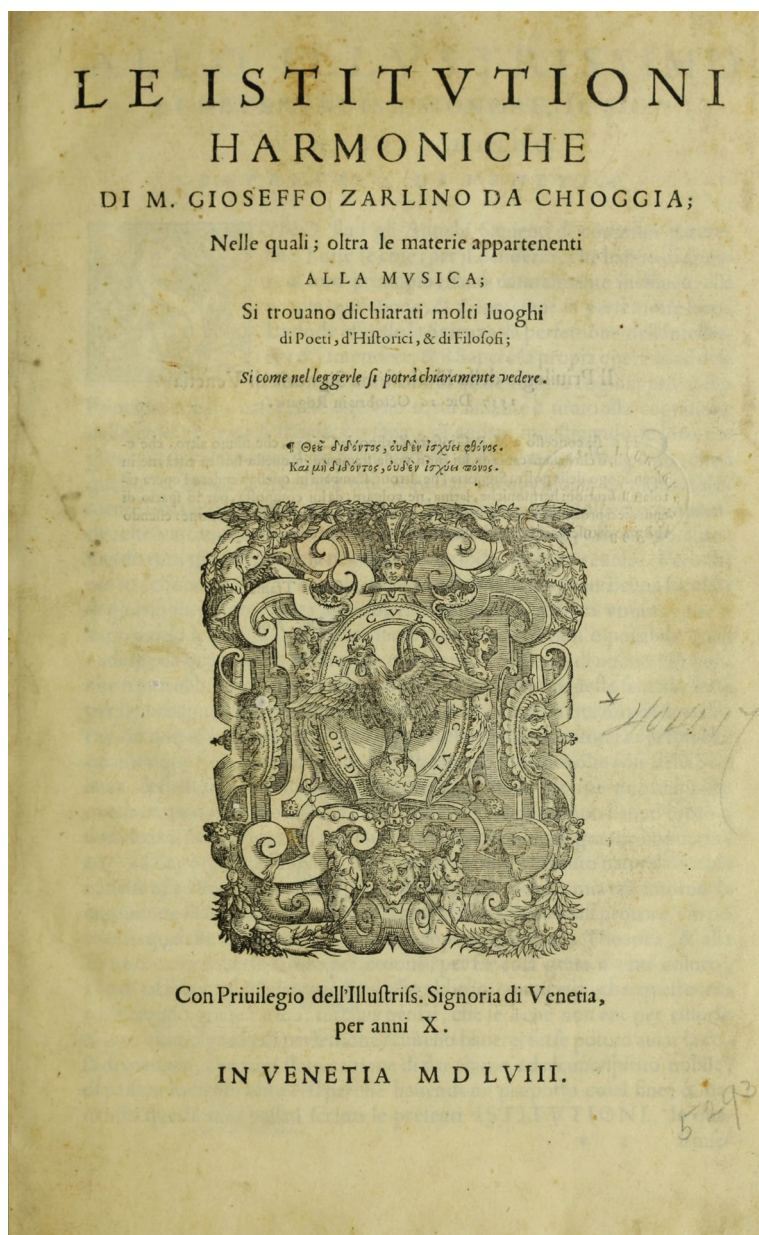


symphony movement, they would all agree—this would be a trivial ask indeed. But if we asked the three preeminent modal theorists of the sixteenth century—Aaron, Glarean, and Zarlino—what the mode of a motet was, they might all come to different conclusions. If we asked a sixteenth-century composer the same question, we might get a different answer still. This prompted Powers to ask a provocative question: “Is mode real?”<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, Powers suggests that this yes-or-no question doesn’t really do justice to the complexity and fascination of sixteenth-century music. Close readings of music theory and study of polyphonic music might instead lead us to ask “*When* is mode real?” or even “*How* is mode real?” When were composers thinking “in” the modes? What did the modes mean to them? This essay will explore these questions and give you some tools for identifying not just what mode a piece is in, but why that might be interesting. But we’ll also think about some of the problems that modal analysis presents, and some alternatives to analyzing Renaissance music according to a modal paradigm.

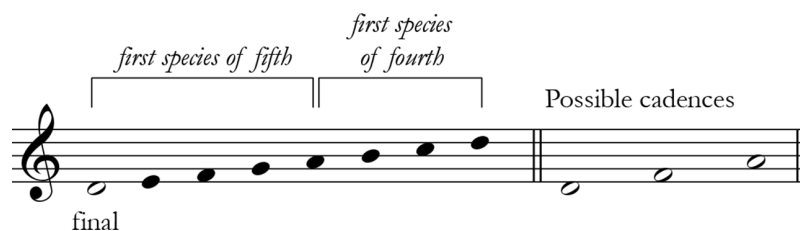
## MODE IN THEORY

Let’s start with Gioseffo Zarlino, a singer, organist, composer, and eventually the music director at St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice (a prestigious post indeed). In addition to his practical pursuits, Zarlino was a music theorist; his 1558 treatise, *Le istitutioni harmoniche*, was one of the most influential music theory books published in the sixteenth century. In his treatise, Zarlino describes twelve modes, each of which is defined according to its 1) scale of an octave, which he divides into a fifth and a fourth, 2) the appropriate notes for beginning and ending a piece of music in this mode, 3) possible locations for cadences, and 4) the affect (or emotional character) of the mode.<sup>2</sup> For example, Zarlino writes that the first mode (which other theorists called the Dorian mode) involves a scale built on D; he divides it into a fifth from D-A (D-E-F-G-A) and a fourth from



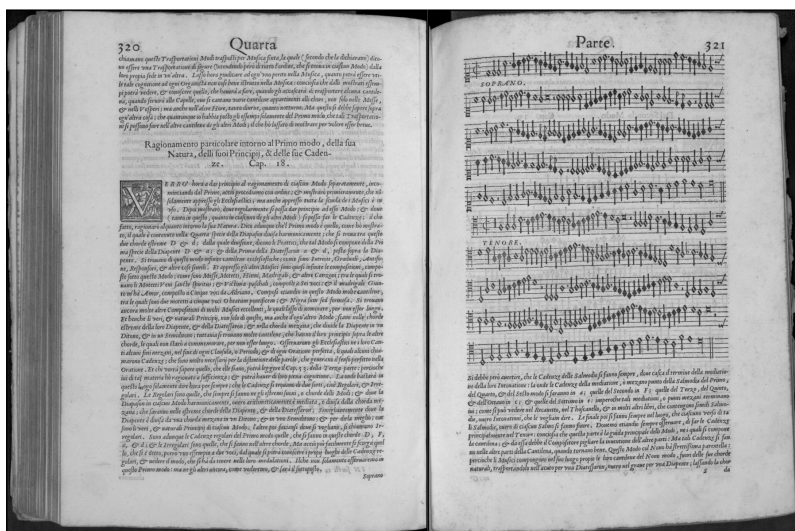
**Figure 1.** Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istitutioni harmoniche*, title page. Note that Zarlino's treatise is written in Italian—the language of practicing musicians—rather than Latin—the language typically reserved for learned scholarly books.

A-d (A-B-c-d) (fig. 2). Zarlino understood the characteristic fifth and fourth of the Dorian mode as *species* of intervals, distinguished from others by their patterns of whole steps and half steps; we can simply think of them as “types” or “kinds” of fifths and fourths. We call D the *final*—a word that means something similar to the modern *tonic*—because it was usually the last note of a piece in Mode 1. Compositions in this mode should emphasize D and A, the mode’s two most important notes, and they may also emphasize F, the midpoint of the D-A fifth. D, F, and A are also, Zarlino states, the notes on which a piece should cadence (though other cadences are possible).<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 2.** Mode 1, as described by Zarlino.

Finally, Zarlino describes the mode’s character: “The first mode has a certain effect midway between sad and cheerful because of the minor third [harmony, which we hear above both D and A], and because of the absence of the major third above D. By nature this mode is religious and devout and somewhat sad; hence we can best use it with words that are full of gravity and that deal with lofty and edifying things” (58). Zarlino was very interested in the difference in feeling between happier major thirds and sadder minor thirds—in fact, he was one of the first music theorists to articulate this idea—and this binary seems to be the heart of his assignment of a “lofty and edifying” character for Mode 1.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 3.** Zarlino's chapter on Mode I. Note that the music example is written in parts—the soprano and tenor part are separated, not put in score. What might this tell us about how Zarlino expected his readers to engage with this text?

But Zarlino doesn't expect his description of the mode to stand alone. He provides a list of "innumerable compositions written in this mode, including Masses, motets, hymns, madrigals, and other songs" (54) written by his teacher, Adrian Willaert, and by himself. What were sixteenth-century readers supposed to make of this list of learned examples—many of which would not be published until 1559, a year after the first edition of Zarlino's treatise was printed? Zarlino was using these musical citations to establish himself as a leading authority on Renaissance musical style.<sup>5</sup> Willaert was one of the most highly regarded Venetian composers in the sixteenth century, and Zarlino's treatise was ostensibly benefiting Willaert's teachings. By linking himself with Willaert, Zarlino ensured that his treatise would become one of the most important musical books published in the sixteenth

century (indeed, early twentieth-century musicologist Alfred Einstein described him as “the theorist of his century and maybe of all centuries”).<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Zarlino also referenced many well-known contemporary musical works—a kind of canon of Renaissance polyphony—appealing to the musical sensibilities of his learned audience. But Zarlino didn’t stop here; he also provided a musical example right in the text: “In order that what I have said may be understood more easily, I shall present an example for two voices, by means of which the reader may know the proper places of the regular cadences and see the manner that should be adhered to in composing their melodic lines” (55).

Let’s look at Zarlino’s example of Mode 1 more closely (Example 1). Listen to the example printed here—or better yet, play it on an instrument, or sing it with a friend. How does Zarlino project the Dorian mode in this short duo?

The annotated score illustrates three important aspects of Zarlino’s compositional strategy. First, this duo is imitative—the piece consists of a series of motives, or subjects, that are stated in one voice, then answered in a second voice, leading to a cadence. I’ve marked each subject in yellow when it appears, and used blue lines between staves to show the pitch interval of imitation (or the level of transposition when the subject is repeated) from the subject to the answer.<sup>7</sup> Second, I’ve labeled cadences in boxes beneath the staff, and noted evaded cadences with arrows. (Sixteenth-century cadences are somewhat different from their eighteenth-century counterparts—they involve motion from a major sixth to a perfect octave, or from a minor third to a unison, usually with a suspension in the ascending voice.<sup>8</sup>) I’ve numbered each section—sections start with an imitative subject and end with a cadence. Finally, I’ve highlighted important melodic pitches by simply writing the letter name above the

staff. As promised, Zarlino's duo emphasizes D and A, the two most important notes of the mode. All but one of the subjects outlines either the fifth from D to A, or the fourth from A to the d above. In each section, the second voice imitates the first either by restating the subject exactly, down an octave (sections 2, 4, and 6), or with what we now call a *tonal answer*, where motion from D to A is recomposed as motion from A to D (or vice versa). Zarlino writes cadences on D and A, and he also composes an evaded cadence to F, the third-most-important pitch in the mode. Finally, Zarlino's melodies emphasize the minor thirds from D-F and from A-c that shape the emotional character of the first mode. The opening subject, for instance, peaks at c twice, highlighting the important A-c interval; the second section, then, peaks at d, providing a local climax that contrasts with the trajectory of the first phrase.

At the same time, a few features of Zarlino's duo don't obviously fit with the Dorian mode as he describes it. Section 5, for instance, starts out with a subject that emphasizes F: is it acceptable to temporarily move away from D and A for contrast? Zarlino's duo also uses a number of accidentals (most of which are marked above the staff here).<sup>9</sup> Most of these—all of the sharps—provide local leading notes at cadences, which were essential to projecting the mode. But what about the B-flat in mm. 21 and 32–33? Though Zarlino doesn't explicitly state that B-flats are fair game in the Dorian mode, B was considered a flexible degree in the sixteenth century; switching occasionally between B-natural and B-flat was simply a means of avoiding contrapuntal indecorum (for instance, avoiding a diminished fifth between B and F in m. 33) or making the melodic line a bit more elegant (perhaps Zarlino didn't like the sound of descending from B-natural to F, and subsequently to D in mm. 21–22). But these B-flats don't necessarily indicate a change of mode.<sup>10</sup>



Example 1. Zarlino's Mode 1 duo.

The musical score is for a Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) duo. It is written in C major and 4/4 time. The score consists of six systems of staves. The Soprano part is in treble clef, and the Tenor part is in bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Blue lines with numbers indicate intervals between notes. Yellow highlights are present under certain notes. Boxed letters 'D' and 'A' are placed above the Tenor staff at measures 12 and 16 respectively. A right arrow is placed below the Tenor staff at measure 24.

System 1: Measures 1-4. Soprano starts with a half note 'd' (D4), followed by quarter notes 'a' (A4) and 'c' (C5). Tenor has a whole rest in measure 1 and a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 2. Interval lines show -4 and -5.

System 2: Measures 5-8. Soprano has quarter notes 'd' (D4), 'a' (A4), 'c' (C5), and 'd' (D4). Tenor has a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 5 and a half note 'a' (A3) in measure 6. Interval lines show -8.

System 3: Measures 9-12. Soprano has quarter notes 'd' (D4), 'a' (A4), 'c' (C5), and 'd' (D4). Tenor has a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 9 and a half note 'a' (A3) in measure 10. Interval lines show +5 and +4.

System 4: Measures 13-16. Soprano has quarter notes 'd' (D4), 'a' (A4), 'c' (C5), and 'd' (D4). Tenor has a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 13 and a half note 'a' (A3) in measure 14. Interval lines show -8.

System 5: Measures 17-20. Soprano has quarter notes 'd' (D4), 'a' (A4), 'c' (C5), and 'd' (D4). Tenor has a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 17 and a half note 'a' (A3) in measure 18. Interval lines show -8.

System 6: Measures 21-24. Soprano has quarter notes 'd' (D4), 'a' (A4), 'c' (C5), and 'd' (D4). Tenor has a half note 'd' (D3) in measure 21 and a half note 'a' (A3) in measure 22. Interval lines show -8.

Example 1. Zarlino's Mode 1 duo.

Musical score for Example I, continued, showing Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.) staves. The score includes measure numbers 28, 32, 36, 40, 44, and 47. Annotations include circled numbers (5, 6), interval markings (+5, -8), and letter labels (c, f, a, D, F). Yellow highlighting is present in several measures.

Measure 28: S. staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. T. staff begins with a bass clef and a common time signature.

Measure 32: S. staff has a circled 5 above the staff. T. staff has a circled 5 below the staff. Interval markings +5 and -8 are shown. Letter labels c, f, and a are present.

Measure 36: S. staff has a circled 6 above the staff. T. staff has a circled 6 below the staff. Interval markings +5 and -8 are shown. Letter labels c, f, and a are present.

Measure 40: S. staff has a circled 6 above the staff. T. staff has a circled 6 below the staff. Interval markings +5 and -8 are shown. Letter labels c, f, and a are present.

Measure 44: S. staff has a circled 6 above the staff. T. staff has a circled 6 below the staff. Interval markings +5 and -8 are shown. Letter labels c, f, and a are present.

Measure 47: S. staff has a circled 6 above the staff. T. staff has a circled 6 below the staff. Interval markings +5 and -8 are shown. Letter labels c, f, and a are present.

Example I. continued.



Although we won't go into this much detail on all twelve modes today, I do want to look carefully at Zarlino's treatment of Mode 2, since it is often confused with Mode 1. Zarlino starts his discussion of the second mode with its emotional character: "Some have claimed that the second mode contains a certain severe and unflattering gravity, and that its nature is tearful and humble. Thus they have called it a lamentful, humble, and deprecatory mode" (58). But what makes this mode so suitable for "words which represent weeping, sadness, loneliness, captivity, calamity, and every kind of misery" (58)? Like the first mode, Mode 2 is based on the first species of fifth (from D-A) and the first species of fourth (from A-D), but here, the fourth is placed *below* the fifth instead of above it (fig. 4). Critically, the final is still D. What has changed is merely the melodic range of the voices, which we call *ambitus*.<sup>11</sup> When the entire range of a mode falls above the final, as in Mode 1, we call it an authentic mode. When the final is in the middle of the range, we call it a plagal mode. (Zarlino tells us in a later chapter that we should use the ambitus of the tenor voice when we make analytical judgments about mode.<sup>12</sup>) The close relationship between these modes is reflected in their names: other theorists called Mode 1 the Dorian mode, and they called Mode 2 the Hypodorian mode (*hypo* meaning "below"). As in

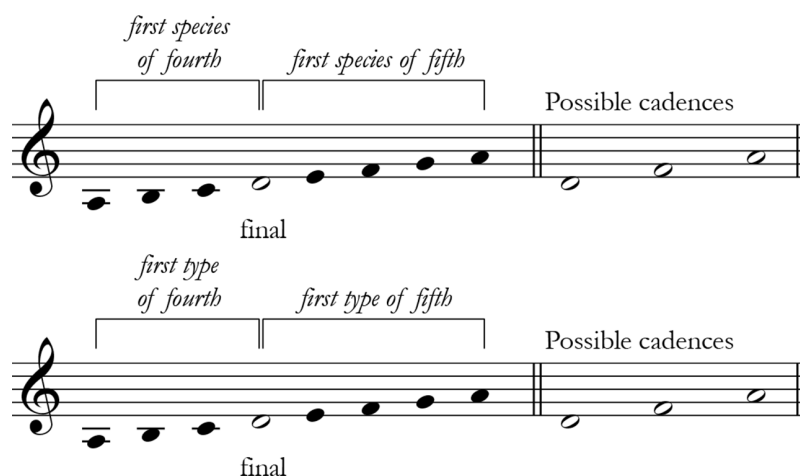


Figure 4. Mode 2, as described by Zarlino.

Mode 1, Zarlino indicates that cadences in Mode 2 will fall on D, F, and A, “this mode being not very different from the first.”

But Zarlino provides few instructions for how to distinguish Modes 1 and 2 in practice. In an earlier chapter, Zarlino suggests that plagal modes should use more descending lines, whereas authentic modes should ascend, and that plagal modes should use slower note values than authentic ones (49). But our best resources for understanding the differences between Modes 1 and 2 are Zarlino’s musical examples. Listen to Example 2—based on these two duos, how does Zarlino distinguish Modes 1 and 2?

How does Zarlino project the plagal quality of this example? The duo is quite different in character from the Mode 1 duo we looked at above. Zarlino still cadences on the same pitches: D, F, and A. But the Mode 2 duo has a much “looser” construction overall. The subjects are shorter and are imitated more freely: for instance, the first answer is a rhythmically varied version of the first subject, Zarlino mostly avoids tonal answers here (except for Section 4), and Zarlino even introduces a sort of inverted answer in Section 5. This duo also has much longer passages without imitation, including the extensive section from m. 39 until the end, where he uses a couple of evaded cadences to extend the passage. But how does he give the effect of “lowness” that plagal modes are supposed to convey? First of all, the duo is literally lower: Zarlino chooses clefs that set the range of each voice about a fifth below their registers in the Mode 1 duo. This clef choice is not arbitrary—it allows Zarlino to place the final in the middle of the overall register rather than at the bottom. Consider the tenor part in the first section: this critical opening subject starts by descending to the A below the final, then reaches up to the F above. Compare this to the opening subject in the Mode 1 duo, where the soprano ascends from D up to A, and then keeps on rising up to C. Zarlino keeps pulling the voices downward throughout the second duo: nearly all the subjects start out by descending, in stark contrast to the rising contour of most of the Mode 1 duo’s subjects.

Soprano

Tenor

5

9

13

17

21

25

①

②

③

④

⑤

+5

+5

+5

+5

-5

rhythmically varied

d

a (lower)

f

D

A

D

Example 2. Zarlino's Mode 2 duo.

29 S. T. A

33 S. T. F

37 S. T. roughly inverted

41 S. T. →

45 S. T. →

49 S. T. D

Example 2. continued.

Based on Zarlino's examples, it seems that the difference between Modes 1 and 2 is as much a matter of feeling—*I know it when I hear it*—as it is an issue of keeping the tenor within a certain melodic range or building imitative subjects to highlight the fifth degree below the final. The chart below summarizes the twelve-mode system, but it glosses over many ambiguities and complications. For instance, different theorists had different ideas about which notes were important in each mode. What's more, all twelve modes could be transposed down a fifth with the addition of a one-flat signature, doubling the number of potential tonalities.<sup>13</sup> These transpositions sometimes introduce extra complications. For instance, Modes 5 and 6 (the Lydian and Hypolydian modes) with an F final, often used a one-flat signature in practice, making these modes potentially indistinguishable from transpositions of Modes 11 and 12, which have a C final (the Ionian and Hypoionian modes). And composers had many different strategies for projecting the differences between authentic and plagal modes, strategies that no single theorist ever wrote about in detail and that are not easily captured in a chart.

Zarlino's discussion of the modes raises many interesting questions, largely because it leaves so many details unarticulated. Who is the audience for this text? Aspiring composers wishing to write new pieces in these modes, or learned scholars wishing to classify existing pieces into modes? Is his theory of mode descriptive or prescriptive? Is Zarlino passing down common knowledge or is he expounding a novel theory—music theory as he wished it were practiced? Are the modal principles he has outlined strict rules or merely general guidelines? And how might we reconcile Zarlino's theories with those of his contemporaries when they conflict?

1. Dorian (final: D)      2. Hypodorian (final: D)

3. Phrygian (final: E)      4. Hypophrygian (final: E)

5. Lydian (final: F)      6. Hypolydian (final: F)

7. Mixolydian (final: G)      8. Hypomixolydian (final: G)

9. Aeolian (final: A)      10. Hypoaeolian (final: A)

11. Ionian (final: C)      12. Hypoionian (final: C)

16th-century additions to the eight mode system

**Figure 5.** Summary of the 12-mode system (after Wiering, 9). Open note heads show the boundaries of each mode's species of fifth and fourth.

## MODE IN PRACTICE

Many of the ambiguities that Zarlino's treatise presents—specifically the questions of his audience and aims—were not problems for earlier generations of modal theorists. Pietro Aaron was among the first sixteenth-century thinkers to reintroduce the modal theory of the Middle Ages to the conversation. Aaron was a singer and a music teacher, and his five music theory books were largely written for music students and interested amateurs.<sup>14</sup> (In fact, Aaron was one of the first music theorists to write in Italian, the language of the people, rather than Latin,

the language of scholars—though this was a pragmatic choice, since Aaron himself admitted that he couldn't write in Latin.) Unlike Zarlino, Aaron was a practical thinker—largely self-taught, he had a knack for connecting older theoretical models to contemporary musical practice.<sup>15</sup> In his 1525 treatise, Aaron set out to do just this. In the introduction, he lamented that none of his predecessors had managed to explain how modes might apply to contemporary repertoire “because it proved otherwise troublesome and exacting.”<sup>16</sup> Aaron aimed to fill that gap, and to correct what he perceived to be lingering misconceptions about mode. His method was particularly novel: he drew examples from recently published books of printed music and showed how each composition fit into a modal category. Aaron used two main criteria to sort compositions into modes, criteria that we're already familiar with from Zarlino: the final, and the species of fifth and fourth outlined by the tenor voice.<sup>17</sup> Critically, Aaron was not arguing that composers had written with the modes in mind; rather, he simply aimed to make existing pieces fit into the modal categories that he was familiar with from plainchant theory. And Aaron did not plan to tell future composers what to do—he never intended to craft rules for musical composition.

#### IDENTIFYING THE MODE OF A COMPOSITION: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Our job as analysts is to determine (a) whether a composer thought they were composing in a mode, and (b) how they thought about the modes. There are no 100% reliable ways to determine what mode a piece is in, but there are some features we might consider in our analysis:

**Final.** Modes are usually determined by the last note of the piece. Depending on which theorist you're reading, the final may

be the last note of the tenor part or the last note of the bass part. (Often the tenor and bass have the same last note, which is helpful!) Remember that modes can be transposed: usually (but not always) when we see a flat signature the mode has been transposed down a fifth or up a fourth. A piece with a G final and no signature is probably in Mode 7 or Mode 8; a piece with a G final and a one-flat signature is probably in transposed Mode 1 or Mode 2.

**Ambitus**(range). Modes are divided into two categories: authentic (the range is mostly above the final) and plagal (the range extends a fourth below and a fifth above the final). Some theorists suggest that you should determine whether you're looking at an authentic or plagal mode based on the range of the tenor voice. Usually, the voices alternate between authentic and plagal modes, which led some theorists to suggest that the distinction between authentic and plagal wasn't important in polyphonic music. Some modern scholars have suggested that we can use the clefs of a composition as a short-hand for identifying the range of a composition.

**Cadences.** For the most part, theorists recommend writing cadences on the final and the fifth above the final. Secondary cadence points vary by theorist and by mode: often theorists suggest that you can cadence on the third over the final (especially in minor modes), but sometimes they recommend the fourth, second, or sixth over the final. And theorists usually mention that a skillful composer can put a cadence just about anywhere.

**Points of imitation.** Often, the opening point of imitation in a composition will clearly outline the mode's species of fifth and fourth.

**Affect.** Many theorists associated specific affects, or emotional characters, with each mode. However, these varied widely among theorists, and aren't usually very helpful for identifying modes. Nevertheless, when you look at the music of a single composer, often you can tell that certain modes have special resonance for them. For instance, laments and elegies are often written in the third and fourth modes (Phrygian and Hypophrygian, the E modes).



Nevertheless, beginning in the 1540s, composers, scribes, and music printers began to take an interest in how they might use modes to organize new compositions and collections of compositions. They began composing and publishing modal cycles—books of compositions where every mode was represented in order (antecedents to cycles like J. S. Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*).<sup>18</sup> These modal cycles are critical to our understanding of mode today, because, like the duos printed in Zarlino’s treatise, these pieces were likely written with the modes “in mind.” As such, they tell us a lot about what composers thought was important for representing a mode in a musical work. One of the first modal cycles that we have identified was Cipriano de Rore’s *Madrigals for Five Voices*, published in 1542—almost twenty years after Aaron devised a theory for classifying compositions into modal categories.<sup>19</sup>

Rore’s collection includes twenty madrigals; the first seventeen of these appear to be modally ordered. The table below lists the madrigals in order and includes three data points that help us identify which mode each piece was meant to represent: the signature, the final (here, the last note in the bass part), and the clef of the highest voice, which is a fairly consistent indicator of ambitus.<sup>20</sup> Rore’s collection is built on the eight-mode system—the twelve-mode system wouldn’t be described for the first time until 1547, five years after Rore’s madrigals were published. We can learn a lot about how Rore understood mode just by looking at this overview of his collection. For instance, Rore carefully alternated clefs, choosing higher clefs for authentic modes and lower clefs for plagal modes.<sup>21</sup> He represented Modes 1 and 2 in transposition—rather than using a D final with no signature, he transposed these down a fifth, selecting a G final with a one-flat signature. But the flat signature meant something different for Modes 5 and 6, the modes with F finals. Here, Rore used a one-flat signature not to signal the transposition of these modes, but rather because the F modes were commonly altered to include a B-flat, which allowed composers to avoid the awkward tritone above the final that would occur in

**Table 1.** Modal assignments for Rore's *Madrigals for Five Voices* (Venice, 1542).

Number	Signature	Clef (ambitus)	Final	Mode	Comments
1	b	g2	G	1	transposed
2	b	g2	G		
3	b	g2	G		
4	b	c1	G	2	transposed
5	b	c1	G		
6	∫	c1	E	3	
7	∫	c1	E		
8	∫	c1	E		
9	∫	c2	E	4	altered to include Bb, but not transposed
10	b	g2	F	5	
11	b	g2	F	6	altered to include Bb, but not transposed
12	b	c1	F		
13	b	c1	F	7	
14	∫	g2	G		
15	∫	g2	G	8	
16	∫	c1	G		
17	∫	c1	G		
18	b	g2	D	not part of the cycle	
19	b	c1	G		
20	∫	c1	E		

a “pure” version of the Lydian or Hypolydian mode—a version of these modes that existed primarily in theory and not in practice.

From this bird’s-eye-view, we could zoom in and study each individual madrigal, much like we studied Zarlino’s musical examples. What pitches does Rore select for cadences in each of these modes? Do his subjects outline the species of fifths and fourths of each mode like Zarlino’s did? Does Rore use any melodic strategies to distinguish authentic and plagal modes? And we might ask historical questions of Rore’s collection as well. Why was he interested in organizing a collection modally in the first place? Maybe the idea came from the printer, Girolamo Scotto—Scotto had published a few collections in 1541 where he labeled the mode of each piece, and he may have wanted to expand that strategy to the organization of a whole book. Perhaps Rore wanted to demonstrate his compositional chops and flexibility—a common strategy in the Renaissance for composers who were seeking more lucrative employment. Maybe Rore had become interested in the modes as a theoretical principle, and wanted to explore them compositionally—indeed, he ran in a circle of theorists and composers who were avidly discussing mode in the 1540s.<sup>22</sup> In any case, Rore’s collection was one of the first tremors that preceded a veritable tidal wave of modal cycles—we know of nearly 500 of these cycles, most of which were composed or published between 1540 and 1620.<sup>23</sup>

## IF NOT MODE, THEN WHAT?

Modal cycles are wonderful documents for helping us understand what mode meant to sixteenth-century composers. But they have proven to be a bit of a red herring as well. Just because some composers wrote music that engaged explicitly with mode some of the time does not mean that all Renaissance polyphony was “in” a mode. What’s more, the relationship between modal theory and modal practice is not always straightforward. As we have seen, Aaron’s modal theory was meant to describe existing musical pieces, but it didn’t necessarily imply that composers were thinking in modal

terms. Zarlino, on the other hand, provided specific instructions to composers interested in writing modal compositions. At the same time, when composers wrote modal cycles—works that were self-consciously “in” the modes—they were undertaking a project that was at least in part theoretical. They were exploring the potential of mode as an organizational framework, not unlike the way Schoenberg and his contemporaries explored the potential of serial techniques in the early twentieth century. But even as all this modal theory and modal practice was “floating around” sixteenth-century Italy, composers were writing a lot of music without thinking about mode at all.

This can be a hard concept for modern musicians to grasp, because we have been taught that modality was an important predecessor to tonality. If every composition written in the eighteenth century is definitely in a key, shouldn't the same principle apply to the sixteenth century? And if some Renaissance music isn't “modal,” then what is it? We have to untangle two important misconceptions to answer these questions. First, the principles of Renaissance counterpoint and the principles of modal theory were built on the same “raw material,” to use Powers's apt phrase: the collection of “white key” notes and B-flat, and the relationships between them, which musicians learned as children and took for granted, and which were mapped onto the famous “Guidonian hand.”<sup>24</sup> As a result, modal theory and contrapuntal practice overlap with one another in significant ways. But composers did not need the organizational structure of modality to write music that was coherent or beautiful—the rules of counterpoint provided all the structure they required. Second, while some modal scales were ancestors of some the major and minor keys, modality was something quite different from tonality. While we tend to use the word *tonality* to describe a collection of musical phenomena—centricity, dominant–tonic polarity, modulation, the organizational framework of the circle of fifths—*modality* was merely a theoretical construct, a layer of constraints that could be placed over the general principles of the Guidonian hand, but was entirely optional.



modes. As Frans Wiering suggests, “the object of modal analysis is [...] to determine whether a mode figured in the composition, what conception the composer had of modality, by which modal characteristics he expressed the mode, how these features might have interfered with non-modal aspects of composition, whether and how the text is expressed by means of the mode, and so forth” (17). Answering these questions requires close reading of modal theory, but let’s not forget that musical works are theoretical documents on their own. Does Rore use similar strategies to express Mode 5 in both of his modal cycles, for instance? How are his strategies different from those of Orlando di Lasso, a composer a generation younger?

But what if mode wasn’t a relevant factor? Can we still make claims about the pitch structure of a composition? Absolutely we can—and music theorists and musicologists are continuing to develop tools to help us understand how Renaissance music was constructed, and how Renaissance composers understood their own compositional tools. For instance, we might explore a composer’s imitative plan. How does the composer devise musical subjects? Do they outline important intervals or highlight specific pitches? How do answering voices work? Do they appear at the same pitch level as the subject, or at new levels? How does the imitation develop over the course of a composition? We analyzed Zarlino’s duos in these terms, but we could use all the same tools without reference to mode at all.

Alternately, we might consider a composition’s large-scale harmonic plan. I have argued elsewhere that in homophonic compositions—which are constructed using quite different principles from the imitative works that we’ve seen so far—composers built musical expectations by pairing cadences a fifth apart.<sup>25</sup> For instance, let’s take a look at how composer Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi constructed the A section of his popular partsong “Il prigioniero” (“The Prisoner”). Gastoldi points from the dominant harmony in the middle of the phrase to the tonic

at its conclusion with several signs. He establishes regular phrase rhythm, with two-measure lines that group into four- and eight-measure units. He manipulates the poetic form to ensure this symmetry—the poem originally has only three lines, but Gastoldi repeats the last line (“Non mi far morir d’amor”) to make us wait for the phrase’s final cadence. Melodically, the opening measures descend from C down to G, which Gastoldi echoes, reharmonized, in mm. 5–6; these descents cause us to expect the eventual arrival of F, our partsong’s final. The two gestures toward the dominant (mm. 4 and 6) orient us toward the final cadence that completes the melodic descent (C-B $\flat$ -A-G-F) and also concludes the rhyme. Gastoldi even decorates this final cadence with a dissonant suspension, further heightening our expectation for resolution in m. 8. This simple phrase creates abundant expectation for the final tonic. Though Gastoldi also uses some traditionally “modal” sounds (like the E $\flat$  major harmony in m. 3), these don’t impact the phrase’s symmetrical form or its large-scale motion from dominant to tonic.

1

O Vez-zo-set-ta\_e bel - la C'hai frà tut-te il pri-mo ho - nor Non mi

I:HC

5

far mo - rir d'a - mor Non mi far Non mi far mo - rir d'a - mor.

V I:PAC

**Example 3.** Gastoldi, “Il prigioniero” (1594), A section.

To try another strategy, we could explore how a composer weaves chromatic pitches in and out of their musical texture—this technique can be illuminating, whether we’re listening to the highly chromatic madrigals of Carlo Gesualdo or more restrained sacred works by a composer like William Byrd. For example, let’s examine Byrd’s motet *Defecit in dolore vita mea*, which we listened to earlier. Byrd drew his text from a few different Biblical passages:

Defecit in dolore vita mea, et anni mei in gemitibus. Infirmata in paupertate virtus mea, et dolor meus renovatus est.

My life is wasted with grief: and my years in sighs. My strength is weakened through poverty, and my sorrow is renewed.

Before reading about this motet, listen again to this recording<sup>26</sup> while following along with the text. Where do you notice major changes in character? What words is Byrd trying to highlight? What is the overall feeling of this motet?

Byrd’s text sets up a series of paradoxes: life and death, strength and weakness, renewal and despair. He reflects this musically by strategically contrasting B-flats and B-naturals throughout the motet. The opening section (Example 4) sets up the motet’s motivic structure: Byrd’s imitative subject emphasizes the half step motion E-F-E (marked with a triangular bracket); the answer inverts this gesture as A-G#-A. He then repeats the subject up a fifth, highlighting the pitches B and C. Byrd comes back to the E-F and B-C half steps again and again in this motet, but I want to draw our attention to his setting of the very last line, “and my sorrow is renewed” (Example 5). Here, Byrd repeats the E-F-E gesture we heard at the beginning, but rather than pairing it with B-C-B, he pairs it with A-Bb-A—this subtle change (marked with a red bracket) had profound implications for the sixteenth-century musicians who would have been singing this piece, because it required them to think in an entirely different hexachord.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, the Bb, which appears on the word







## CONCLUSION

All the analytical strategies we've just tried out—exploring imitative structure, discovering the large-scale harmonic plan, and tracing the use of chromatic pitches—are compatible with modal analysis, but none of them require mode as a pre-compositional or an analytical framework. In fact, the mode is often the least interesting thing about the tonal structure of a piece of music composed in the Renaissance. It is important to remember that mode is first and foremost a theoretical tradition, not a practical one. We may want to use musical works, like Rore's cycle, as evidence to help us understand mode better, but mode is not necessarily a particularly useful framework to help us understand musical works better. Instead, it's the ways in which composers manipulate the “raw material”—the collection of notes available on the Guidonian hand and the hexachord system that supports them—that shapes the inner workings of most compositions from the sixteenth century.

## SOME PROMPTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Mode provides a rich case study on the relationship between theory and practice. While some music theories are prescriptive (providing rules for composition), others are descriptive (designed to interpret existing musical works). Can you think of some examples of music theory preceding practice? What about music theory that follows practice? To what extent are modal cycles evidence of musical practice? Music theory?
- Orlando di Lasso's 1577 collection of duos, *Novae aliquot ... ad duas voces cantiones* (“Several New Songs for Two Voices”), is an example of a modally ordered cycle—we know that Lasso thought of each of these works as representing a mode. Pick one of Lasso's duos, and analyze it using the discussion of

Zarlino's compositions as a model. Refer to the how-to guide on p. 142–43 as you analyze your duo. Which mode do you think Lasso is trying to represent in your duo? What strategies does he use to project the mode? What aspects of mode are important to him?

- Different music theorists approached the modes differently. Select a mode, and read what Glarean and Zarlino have to say about it. What do their theories have in common? Where are they different? Study the examples they provide. Would they agree on the modal assignment of each example?

## NOTES

1. Harold Powers, "Is Mode Real?" *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* 16 (1992): 10–11.
2. The modal system of the Middle Ages had only eight modes—how did Zarlino get from eight to twelve? Zarlino was building on the life's work of Heinrich Glarean, a bookish Swiss philosophy professor and music theorist, who had argued for the addition of four modes (on A and C) to the traditional eight (on D, E, F, and G) in his massive treatise, *Dodecachordon* (1547).
3. Gioseffo Zarlino, *On the Modes: Part Four of Le Istitutioni Harmoniche*, 1558, ed. Claude V. Palisca, trans. Vered Cohen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 54–58.
4. Gioseffo Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint: Part Three of Le Istitutioni Harmoniche*, 1558, trans. Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 21–22, 69–70, 186–88. On Zarlino's theory of "interval affect"—and on the reasons why it's not as groundbreaking as many scholars have made it out to be—see Joel Lester, *Between Modes and Keys: German Theory, 1592–1802* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1989), viii–x, 14–20; Timothy R. McKinney, *Adrian Willaert and the Theory of Interval Affect* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).
5. Musical examples in sixteenth-century theory books tell us a lot about the audiences these books were meant to attract. Are the examples newly composed by the author (like Zarlino's), or are they borrowed from the existing repertoire? Are they printed in the book, or simply referenced in the prose? Are they meant to be sung, or played at an instrument, or simply contemplated? For a fascinating exploration of these questions and more, see

- Cristle Collins Judd, *Reading Renaissance Music Theory: Hearing with the Eyes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 179–261.
6. Alfred Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, trans. Alexander Haggerty Krappe, Roger Sessions, and W. Oliver Strunk, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), I: 453.
  7. This method for analyzing imitation is drawn from Peter Schubert, “A Lesson from Lassus: Form in the Duos of 1577,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 17, no. 1 (1995). For a comprehensive introduction to imitative techniques and terminology, see John Milsom, “Crecquillon, Clemens, and Four-Voice *fuga*,” in *Beyond Contemporary Fame: Resassessing the Art of Clemens non Papa and Thomas Crecquillon*, ed. Eric Jas (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).
  8. Sixteenth-century cadences are derived from melodic formulas rather than harmonic progressions (in contrast to cadences in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music). We call the ascending voice the *clausula cantizans* (this is the voice that usually has a suspension), and the descending voice the *clausula tenorizans*. In textures with more than two voices, composers often add a *bassizans* (which usually descends by fifth) and an *altizans* (a middle voice). Don’t be misled by terms like “tenor-” and “cant-”—these melodic formulas can appear in any voice. For a more complete introduction to Renaissance cadences, see Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Sources, with Revisions by the Author*, trans. Ellen Beebe (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988), 90–101.
  9. These accidentals are called *musica ficta*, or “false” music. In Renaissance music, many accidentals were not notated—it was expected that musicians would simply know to raise or lower certain pitches, either to make leading tones at cadences (as in m. 7) or to avoid dissonant augmented fourths or diminished fifths (as in m. 33). Today, editors place these presumed accidentals above the staff to help us to distinguish them from the accidentals that were explicitly notated in the original source (like the B-flat in m. 21). Critically, because these accidentals were not notated, and the rules for applying them were largely passed down orally, modern scholars and editors don’t always know for sure when they would have been used (and, indeed, sixteenth-century musicians often disagreed). But this notational flexibility was deliberate. Contemporary musicians used their discretion with accidentals—within reason—much like a modern performer might add stylistically appropriate ornamentation in a repeated section of a dance movement or aria.
  10. In fact, in an earlier chapter, Zarlino notes that occasional Bbs do not transform the mode, but frequent Bbs suggest that the mode has been transposed (50).

11. For a contemporary illustration of ambitus, sing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.” Most of this melody falls above the tonic note; it immediately leaps up an octave and makes its way back down to tonic. But compare this to “Happy Birthday”—this tune starts on the fifth below the tonic, ascends to the fifth above the tonic, and then lands on the tonic itself, right in the middle. “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” has an authentic ambitus, and “Happy Birthday” has a plagal ambitus.
12. In polyphonic music, adjacent voices typically have different ranges (for instance, the soprano may have a plagal ambitus, the alto an authentic ambitus, the tenor a plagal ambitus, and the bass an authentic ambitus). But authentic and plagal modes are primarily distinguished by ambitus—this is one of the most intractable problems that sixteenth-century theorists faced when they adapted modal theory.
13. We’ll use the word *signature* rather than *key signature*, since keys wouldn’t emerge for another century.
14. On Aaron’s audience and motivations, see Judd, 37–56. For Aaron’s life and background, see Bonnie J. Blackburn, “The Peripatetic Career of a Converted Jew: the Music Theorist Pietro Aaron” (forthcoming).
15. Pietro Aaron, *Trattato della natura et cognitione di tutti gli tuoni di canto figurato non da altrui piu scritti* (Venice: Bernardino de Vitali, 1525). Aaron’s treatise is partially translated in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 415–27. For a summary of Aaron’s theoretical principles and their implications for our modern understanding of mode, see Harold Powers, “Tonal Types and Modal Categories in Renaissance Polyphony,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 3 (1981): 433–34; Powers, “Is Mode Real?” 22–32.
16. Aaron, trans. Strunk, 417–18.
17. Aaron was working with a theory of eight modes, not twelve like Zarlino, so he devised a series of complicated principles to classify pieces that did not fit well into his theory. Eight-mode theory only allows for finals on D, E, F, and G (Zarlino’s Modes 1 through 8). Aaron accounted for pieces with finals on A and C using a principle called the *confinal*, which linked these “irregular” finals with the modes a fifth below.
18. Accessed April 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCqWH9bKzQE>.
19. For a discussion of Rore’s modal cycle see Powers, “Tonal Types and Modal Categories,” 444; Frans Wiering, *The Language of the Modes: Studies in the History of Polyphonic Modality* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 112–16.
20. The combination of signature–clef–final is called a “tonal type.” Tonal types are a neutral way of describing the “tonality” of a piece of music without

assigning it to a mode. The notion of tonal types was first introduced by Siegfried Hermelink in *Dispositiones modorum: Die Tonarten in der Musik Palestrinas und seiner Zeitgenossen* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1960) and developed in Powers, “Tonal Types and Modal Categories.” It is not always clear whether the final is the last note of the bass part (as in Rore’s collection) or the last note of the tenor part (as Zarlino suggested).

21. We label clefs based on clef type (g clef = treble clef, f clef = bass clef, c clef = alto or tenor clef) and which line of the staff the clef appears on (g2 = a treble clef that is printed on the second line from the bottom of the staff, like a modern treble clef; c1 = a c clef that is printed on the bottom line of the staff, which we call a soprano clef). g2 is higher than c1, which is higher than c2. A clef’s “height” is really a description of the range of the staff when you don’t use leger lines. So a g2 clef allows for pitches between the d above middle C and the g an octave above that, a c1 clef allows for pitches a third lower, and the c2 clef allows for pitches a third lower still.
22. Wiering, 112–16.
23. The appendix to Wiering lists all the modal cycles we know about (though not all of them survive), and Chapter 5 of his book discusses their chronology, context, and characteristics. If you’d like to spend some more time thinking about mode, select a cycle from Wiering’s appendix and try analyzing it in detail.
24. Powers, “Is Mode Real?” 14–16. The Guidonian hand was a mnemonic device to help children learn to read music. Students were taught solmization (solfège) syllables (like our modern “do re mi”) using the hymn “Ut queant laxis”—this hymn works just like “Doe, a deer” from *The Sound of Music*. Each syllable had a place on the hand; teachers could point at a position on their own hand and students would sing back the appropriate note. (See footnote 25, below, for more information about Renaissance solmization.)
25. Megan Kaes Long, *Hearing Homophony: Tonal Expectation at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
26. Accessed March 9, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvjdP-KIKQw&feature=youtu.be>.
27. Renaissance solmization was based on three interlocking hexachords, each of which were solmized *ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la*: the natural hexachord (C-D-E-F-G-A), the “hard” hexachord (G-A-B-C-D-E), and the “soft” hexachord (F-G-A-B $\flat$ -C-D). Normally, in a piece with no signature like *Defecit in dolore*, singers would stick to the natural and hard hexachords. These B $\flat$ s would have required the singers to shift to the soft hexachord. As in the Mode 1 duo we looked at earlier, this shift didn’t necessarily change the global tonality of the piece;

rather, it provided a contrasting color, kind of like the introduction of the Neapolitan at a cadence in a Baroque keyboard suite.

28. While modal theory was ubiquitous on the European continent, we have very little evidence of modal thinking in England—for instance, no English composers wrote modal cycles, in contrast to the nearly 500 cycles we know about from the continent. On alternative frameworks for understanding English music, see Jessie Ann Owens, “Concepts of Pitch in English Music Theory, c. 1560–1640,” in *Tonal Structures in Early Music*, ed. Cristle Collins Judd (New York: Garland, 1998).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

### Introductions to modal theory

Richard Freedman, “Learning to Be a Musician,” in *Music in the Renaissance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 17–34.

Elam Rotem, “Modes in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *Early Music Sources*, YouTube video.

Anne Smith, “Mode,” in *The Performance of 16th-Century Music: Learning from the Theorists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 88–101.

Frans Wiering, *The Language of the Modes: Studies in the History of Polyphonic Modality* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

### Editions and translations of sixteenth-century sources

Pietro Aaron, *Trattato della natura et cognitione di tutti gli tuoni di canto figurato*, Venice, 1525. Partially translated in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 415–27.

Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon*. Basel, 1547. Translated by Clement A. Miller (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1965).

Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche*. Venice, 1558. Partially translated by Vered Cohen as *On the Modes*, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

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- Joel Lester, *Between Modes and Keys: German Theory, 1592–1802* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1989).
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- Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Sources, with Revisions by the Author*, trans. Ellen Beebe (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988).
- John Milsom, "Crecquillon, Clemens, and Four-Voice *fuga*," in *Beyond Contemporary Fame: Resassessing the Art of Clemens non Papa and Thomas Crecquillon*, ed. Eric Jas (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005): 293–345.
- Jessie Ann Owens, "Concepts of Pitch in English Music Theory, c. 1560–1640," in *Tonal Structures in Early Music*, ed. Cristle Collins Judd (New York: Garland, 1998): 183–246.
- Harold Powers, "Tonal Types and Modal Categories in Renaissance Polyphony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 34, no. 3 (1981): 428–70.
- Harold Powers, "Is Mode Real?" *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* XVI (1992): 9–52.
- Peter Schubert, "A Lesson from Lassus: Form in the Duos of 1577," *Music Theory Spectrum* 17, no. 1 (1995): 1–26.
- Frans Wiering, *The Language of the Modes: Studies in the History of Polyphonic Modality* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
- Gioseffo Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint: Part Three of Le Istitutioni Harmoniche, 1558*, trans. Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
- Gioseffo Zarlino, *On the Modes: Part Four of Le Istitutioni Harmoniche, 1558*, trans. Vered Cohen, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

# WAGNER ON CONDUCTING: THE AESTHETICS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN PERFORMANCE

By Daniel Barolsky

*Starting in high school, I became obsessed with such classical performers as Jacqueline du Pré and Glenn Gould, whose recordings I desperately collected. But whenever I tried to discuss these musicians in class or with professors, my passion for their interpretations was dismissed or even mocked as a superficial fetish. To them, only composers, their intentions, and the notes in the score mattered. Later, in graduate school, I studied with Philip Bohlman, whose groundbreaking article “Musicology as a Political Act” argued that to choose to ignore the social and political nature of music and focus only on “the music itself” was, itself, a political act.<sup>1</sup> To deny the social nature of music only served to reinforce existing values that have long marginalized populations. Bohlman’s argument resonated with me, as it shed light on how and why musical disciplines and criticism have historically ignored performers and focused, instead, only on composers. In my research and teaching, I have sought to push back at the aesthetic values and descriptive/analytic language that we often use to describe music.*

*This language has served to dismiss performers and their bodies as merely re-creative conduits between the composer and listener, rather than to celebrate them as the creative and embodied representations of music that they are.*

*And yet, so determined was I to promote historical recognition of performers that I initially remained closed off to how the political language described by Bohlman pertained to the critical language describing performers. I bought Wagner's "On Conducting" early in my career, excited by the insight he could provide on performers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also delighted to learn different ways musicians of note talked about interpretation, the subject I was most interested in. I spent most of my time focused on the early parts of the book, the discussion of interpretation and the history of conductors. I may have noticed the anti-Semitism at the end and knew of Wagner's anti-Semitism, but was more interested in the ways the author analyzed performance. Moreover, many discussions online, at conferences, and within certain professional organizations, allowed me to sweep the bigotry under the rug and focus on "just the music itself" or, rather, just the performances themselves.*

*This essay is a result of what happened when I took a step back and was pushed to reflect on how easy it was for musical obsessions and passions to obscure the implicit politics and bigotry that pervade the criticism and discussion of performers. I became increasingly aware of how my own analyses of individual performers uncritically drew upon the problematic language of nationalism or identity. This essay is an attempt to grapple with this issue, to offer some historical context, and to challenge us all to think more critically about how our descriptive language, even when celebratory, carries deeply rooted associations.*

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The influence of Richard Wagner (1813–1883) over the last two centuries is undeniable. His image and music haunt concert halls and textbooks, while theorists of music, theater, and cinema regularly cite elements of his compositional and dramatic style.

Even beyond the realm of music, artists, poets, directors, writers, and politicians have adopted and developed Wagner's aesthetic, nationalist, and philosophical views for over a century and a half.

It often seems, when one peruses library bookshelves or a variety of online resources, as though Wagner and his work have been analyzed to death. But sometimes we find texts that are overlooked or elements of a musician's writing that offer new insights when examined through an unconventional lens or in a new political climate. Rather than discuss Wagner's extensive compositional output, as most tend to do, I would like to consider the intersection of two elements of Wagner's life and work that have become, in this day and age, increasingly relevant: 1) his history of anti-Semitism and 2) his views on performance and interpretation. By juxtaposing these two areas, usually thought about in isolation, I encourage the reader to consider two related issues. The first is much-discussed, however unresolved: how do we understand the relationship between a musician's intentions and biography—especially if containing problematic elements—and their musical output? The second issue is trickier, since musical meaning has historically been attributed to the motivations of composers but not performers. I would argue, however, that we can and should identify elements of anti-Semitism in Wagner's views of performance. Such a study reveals how aesthetic categories of performance have quietly perpetuated an underlying history of bigotry that has long been ignored.

## WAGNER AND ANTI-SEMITISM

In order to examine Wagner's aesthetics of performance, we must first provide a brief context and history of his anti-Semitism. Wagner's antagonistic views towards Jews are well known. In his anonymously published essay from 1850, titled "Das Judentum in der Musik" (often translated as "Jewishness in Music"<sup>2</sup>), Wagner lays out several racist arguments: Jews were a corrupting influence

on society (especially German society); Jews were the cause of music's decline since the death of Ludwig van Beethoven a quarter century earlier; and Jews exploited their commercial power to promote Jewish composers of opera (a reference to the composer Giacomo Meyerbeer<sup>3</sup>) over those more deserving of promotion (i.e., Wagner). Wagner claims that because they lacked a homeland, spoke an "impure" language (Yiddish) or dead language (Hebrew), and had no real musical history upon which to draw, Jews were incapable of being truly creative and, ultimately, truly human. Even Felix Mendelssohn<sup>4</sup> (a practicing Lutheran whose father converted from Judaism) was only capable of imitating or copying the most superficial elements of such truly "great" composers as J. S. Bach or Beethoven.

Wagner's critique of Mendelssohn reflects the degree to which stereotypical conceptions of "Jews" were both contradictory and derivative. The category of "Jew" conflated religion and socioeconomic status with the increasingly biological notion of race that was emerging over the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> But for Wagner and his disciplines, it was less important that the object of their bigotry was consistently defined because, more importantly, "Jews" represented a scapegoated "other" against which Germans opposed themselves.<sup>6</sup> As is often the case with nationalist movements, it is much easier to identify and condemn fabricated threats to the nation rather than to try to integrate the various and diverse elements of a community that make up a single nation.

Wagner's anti-Semitism was hardly exceptional among German nationalists or, sadly, contemporary musicians (e.g., Robert Schumann<sup>7</sup> or Frédéric Chopin<sup>8</sup>) who are still beloved by many today. *Unlike* many of his contemporaries, however, Wagner was vehemently outspoken about his bigotry and, moreover, made it clear that one's Jewish identity and ability to create music were inherently linked. He repeatedly encouraged his readers and audiences to consider how music and identity related to each other.<sup>9</sup>

## ANTI-SEMITISM AND MUSIC

For decades, critics neglected this encouragement and avoided reflecting on how Wagner's own bigoted belief system might connect to his musical output. Wagner's anti-Semitism was hardly a secret; it pervaded many of his writings. He even republished "Jewishness in Music" in 1869, this time with his name attached. But with few exceptions, it was not until the late 1960s that scholars launched a systematic exploration of Wagner's anti-Semitism and its significance, leading to extensive and largely polemical discussion within the scholarly community and the increasing awareness on the part of audiences.<sup>10</sup>

On one side of the debate, Wagner's defenders insisted that the composer's "distasteful" views had nothing to do with the music that they held so near and dear. German intellectual Dieter Borchmeyer famously wrote in the 1990s that "[Wagner's] hatred of the Jews was excluded from the inner sanctum of his artistic personality."<sup>11</sup> Such views were echoed by many, including by the Jewish, Argentinian-born pianist/conductor Daniel Barenboim who claimed that even if Wagner's personal views were "monstrous," by contrast, in "the operas themselves [...] [t]here is not one Jewish character [or] anti-Semitic remark."<sup>12</sup>

Others attempted to minimize the bigotry by citing Jewish apologists, including Barenboim; Wagner's collaborator, the conductor Herman Levi; and the Jewish-born composer/conductor Gustav Mahler. In other words, some claimed, if Jewish musicians could see the good in Wagner's music, his personal views must be irrelevant, or at the very least, palatable.<sup>13</sup> The specters of the Second World War and the Holocaust colored the debate—surprisingly, on both sides.<sup>14</sup> Some went so far as to project Wagner as a victim of Nazi appropriation since his music was beloved by Adolf Hitler and served as a sonic marker for Nazi Germany in propaganda, by both the Germans<sup>15</sup> and Americans<sup>16</sup>. We are reminded by his defenders that Wagner died long before the rise of the Third Reich and that

his music was unfairly associated with the Holocaust, a horror to which Wagner, they claimed, would surely have objected.<sup>17</sup> As long as Wagner's anti-Semitism did not rise to the Nazis' level, there was no need to delve further into it.

To better understand these defensive responses, we must remember the pervasive and dominant centrality of Wagner's musical influence in the world of classical music. Any criticism of Wagner is often taken as a challenge to the larger values around "civilization" that he and his music represent. So entrenched, however, is Wagner's music in so many musical curricula and historical narratives, that the strategies employed to defend or contextualize Wagner's bigotry ultimately depend on explaining away his anti-Semitism as a historical vestige or trying to separate his music from his ideology.<sup>18</sup>

But we must also remember that his anti-Semitism needs to be understood within the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to recognize that, within that context, Wagner would have resisted any notion that his philosophical ideas (and thus his views on Jews) be in any way separated from the deeply Romantic, political, nationalistic, and mythical stories of his musical dramas.<sup>19</sup> Wagner would have been the last person to suggest that his philosophical or political ideas were extricable from "the music itself."<sup>20</sup> Although Barenboim and other defenders are correct that Wagner never explicitly labels any of his characters as Jewish, scholars have convincingly argued that the physical descriptions, actions, and behaviors so vividly attributed by Wagner as so-called "Jewish" traits, are the overt characteristics of the corrupt or evil-doing characters in his dramas.<sup>21</sup> Wagner operates within what David Levin has described as an "aesthetic of anti-Semitism."<sup>22</sup> Musically and dramatically, the composer portrays the attributes that he ascribes to Jews in his operas without explicitly labeling them as Jewish. These racist tropes were well recognized, however, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and

audiences would have needed very little prompting to draw the connection.

Consider the character of Sixtus Beckmesser in Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, which premiered in 1868. Beckmesser's actions and qualities align exactly with those of the "Jew" described by Wagner in his essay "Jewishness in Music."<sup>23</sup> Early in the drama, thanks to his position of power within the guild of the mastersingers, Beckmesser dismisses the performance by the Germanic Walther for not following the prescribed rules of composition and thus stifles and belittles Walther's natural creativity. It is not difficult to see the parallels between Beckmesser and the Jewish critics whom Wagner blamed for his failures to succeed early in his career. But beyond these biographical parallels, Beckmesser's inflexible insistence on following rules at the expense of natural-born genius reflects Wagner's views of Jews, whom he saw as unable to create on their own, dependent on societal convention, and intent on maintaining their economic status.

The most unsubtle moment in Wagner's musical drama comes at the end when Beckmesser steals a song written by Walther and tries to pass it off as his own in an attempt to win a song contest (and also the hand of Eva, the daughter of the local goldsmith). Like Jews who, according to Wagner, can imitate without deeply understanding, Beckmesser ends up performing the song without any comprehension of its meaning, resulting in a ridiculed performance, public mockery by the masses, and expulsion from the *Volk*. Walther steps in and reveals, in his performance, the "true" meaning of the song. His performance is celebrated as a final reminder of music's connection to the German nation and the evils of "foreign" (that is, Jewish) influence. The "true" mastersinger Hans Sachs ends the opera<sup>24</sup> with the following jingoistic, xenophobic, nationalistic bluster:



<p>Beware! Evil tricks threaten us:  if the German people and kingdom should one day decay,  under a false, foreign rule  soon no prince would understand his people;  and foreign mists with foreign vanities  they would plant in our German land;  what is German and true none would know,  if it did not live in the honour of German Masters.  Therefore I say to you:  honour your German Masters,  then you will conjure up good spirits!  And if you favour their endeavours,  even if the Holy Roman Empire  should dissolve in mist,  for us there would yet remain  holy German Art!</p>	<p>Habt Acht! Uns dräuen üble Streich':  zerfällt erst deutsches Volk und Reich,  in falscher wälscher Majestät  kein Fürst bald mehr sein Volk versteht,  und wälschen Dunst mit wälschem Tand  sie pflanzen uns in deutsches Land;  was deutsch und echt, wüsst' keiner mehr,  lebt's nicht in deutscher Meister Ehr'.  Drum sag' ich euch:  ehrt eure deutschen Meister!  Dann bannt ihr gute Geister;  und gebt ihr ihrem Wirken Gunst,  zerging' in Dunst  das heil'ge röm'sche Reich,  uns bliebe gleich  die heil'ge deutsche Kunst!<sup>15</sup></p>
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Wagner had no need to name the “Jew” explicitly when his audiences would have recognized the archetype’s otherness in his musically dramatic depiction. In the section that follows, we will see that Wagner’s anti-Semitism can be no more extracted from his aesthetic views on performance than it can be separated from many of his musical works.

## MUSIC HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE

In 1869, the year after the premiere of *Die Meistersinger* and the same year he took credit for “Jewishness in Music,” Wagner published *Über das Dirigiren* (translated as *On Conducting or About Conducting*).<sup>26</sup> Wagner’s text is remarkable, novel, and ground-breaking as he traces a history of conducting—a history in which Wagner played no small role—and develops theories of interpretation and the role of the performer that continue to influence approaches to performance and aesthetics today.<sup>27</sup> It is not uncommon to hear a music critic describe a performance that applies dramatic changes to tempo as “Wagnerian.” This term is a reference to the fact that Wagner advocated a flexible use of tempo in order to better capture or convey certain essential

qualities of the music. For Wagner, these alterations to the score were not a violation. Rather, they served to channel the spirit of the composer, whom Wagner claimed to understand better than most.<sup>28</sup> For Wagner, it took a great artist to interpret great music.

Those who have written about this text have tended to focus almost exclusively on Wagner's description of specific, technical elements of performance as well as the history of conductors laid out.<sup>29</sup> Few have attended to how performance can shape or determine what music might mean, and even fewer critics acknowledge the presence of Wagner's customary anti-Semitism in *On Conducting*.<sup>30</sup> In spite of Wagner's argument to the contrary, most readers of Wagner's text focused almost exclusively and narrowly on issues pertaining to questions of performance and interpretation and not on larger political or ideological meanings.

The reasons for this separation or divide have foundations in the way the history of classical music has been discussed over the last two centuries. Music historians (as well as music theorists, who in many cases provide many of the analytic tools used by musicologists) have focused almost exclusively on composers, their notated "works," and their supposed intentions, not the performers who present, embody, or interpret these compositions. Most music history textbooks push such influential and popular performers as Jenny Lind,<sup>31</sup> Adelina Patti,<sup>32</sup> or Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins<sup>33</sup> (all rough contemporaries of Wagner) to the margins of histories, leaving no room for writings on performance like Wagner's.<sup>34</sup>

There are any number of causes for this separation of performance and composition, a separation that became increasingly heightened around 1800. First, critics and composers developed the concept of the musical work as a fixed object that warranted analysis and reflection, rather than the idea of music as a practice, something that existed in time and space and that had a social component to it.<sup>35</sup> Second, changes in understandings of notation<sup>36</sup> gave the musical work a kind of material "thing-ness."

It was something one could hold, read, study, analyze. For many, it was something that represented the personal and human touch of the genius composer<sup>37</sup>. All of these tangible elements were missing from performances which, until the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries were ephemeral, since recording technology had not yet been developed to turn performances into objects or commodities.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as Matthew Gelbart has argued, the rise of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reinforced the identification of musical “works” with individual creators rather than their interpreters, and also reinforced their connection to emerging nation-states.<sup>39</sup> Finally, discussions of music, especially in German-speaking communities, combined the experience of studying music with Romantic and philosophical ideas. It was not enough to play or hear the music of Beethoven. One had to “understand” his music as one might understand the writings of a philosopher.<sup>40</sup>

## THE AESTHETICS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN PERFORMANCE

In contrast with these composer-centric narratives, Wagner’s *On Conducting* focuses on the history and changing role of conductors and performers. The study provides a fascinating context for many overlooked performers and sheds light on performance practices from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet it is anything but a neutral or “objective” narrative. Wagner creates a historical problem for which he personally represents the ideal solution. In the beginning, so his history reads, there were solid old-fashioned conductors (“the true German Capellmeister”) with substance but no progressive technique to accommodate modern music.<sup>41</sup> Later there emerged theater conductors and those who studied at the conservatory, with impressive skill and technique but who lacked “genius” (i.e., the ability to really understand music) and who could not “properly come to terms with the German artistic ideals that are the only goal

of everything noble, because those ideals are foreign to them in the deepest recesses of their nature.”<sup>42</sup> “Everything about them,” Wagner wrote, “their reputation, talent, education, and indeed their faith, love, and hope—was artificial.”<sup>43</sup> Implicit (and often explicit) in this commentary and the remainder of the text is the suggestion that Wagner’s insight and influence presented the one true path for music interpretation of the future. Wagner is the only one who can combine the spiritual purity of the older Capellmeisters with the techniques of modern conductors. And he does so with a manner that best captures the spirit and intentions of the composer and is thus true to their art.

However, when Wagner sings his own praises as the conductor with *the* correct approach, he more than often juxtaposes his conducting with a foil—namely, Jewish conductors: Felix Mendelssohn, Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Ferdinand Hiller. The opposition he draws is anything but subtle. In fact, Wagner is almost entirely dependent on Jewish musicians to make his case for an aesthetic of performance, that is, determining which qualities of interpretation are deemed beautiful or acceptable and which are tasteless, superficial, or “wrong.” As creative artists, conductors, for Wagner, make their own decisions as performers that critics must attend to and evaluate. But once elevated to the status of creative artists, performers are subject to the same criteria by which Wagner dismisses Jewish musicians by mapping those elements of performance he deems negative onto anti-Semitic qualities he ascribes to Jews, while at the same time applying and aligning his own “genius” as a performer with his sense of German-ness.

With the use of the term “Jews,” of course, Wagner invokes stereotypes of Jews as an imaginary “other” to Germans, not as an accurate portrayal of people of the Jewish faith or ancestry.<sup>44</sup> It clearly meant little to Wagner, his contemporaries, or successors, that both Mendelssohn and Hiller had converted to Protestantism. As David Levin argues, “the mark of the Jew in Wagner’s works is, in the end, less physiognomical or social (although it is these things too) than it is aesthetic [...] Jews in Wagner’s works are

dogged by aesthetic qualities that the composer loathed. Wagner seems to introduce Jews as the carriers of those qualities if only in order to expel them. For in thus dispensing with them, Wagner's works also dispense with the aesthetic qualities they embody."<sup>45</sup> Levin applies this reading to the character of Beckmesser in *Meistersinger*, who is shunned at the end of the drama, and later to other musical dramas.<sup>46</sup>

As we will see, Wagner similarly applies negative aesthetic qualities to the likes of Mendelssohn and his school in order to discount both of them. This aesthetic of anti-Semitism can be found throughout *On Conducting*. Take, for instance, this oft-cited passage on tempo, in which Wagner and Mendelssohn observe the conductor Carl Gottlieb Reissiger performing the eighth symphony of Beethoven:

I once attended a performance of this symphony in Dresden that was conducted by the late capellmeister Reissiger. I was there with Mendelssohn, and spoke with him both about the tempo dilemma I have discussed here, and my solution to it. I further mentioned that I had come to an understanding with my colleague Reissiger (or rather, I thought I had), who had promised that he would play the third movement slower than usual. Mendelssohn agreed with me completely. So we listened to the performance. But when the third movement began, I was startled to hear the same old, [swift] Ländler tempo once again. Before I was able to express my displeasure, Mendelssohn smiled at me, swaying his head complacently, and said "It's good like that! Bravo!," at which my shock turned to astonishment. I afterwards realized that I should not complain unduly about Reissiger's lapse into the old tempo (for reasons I shall discuss below). But Mendelssohn's insensitivity to this peculiar artistic instance naturally awakened doubts in me as to whether he was able to distinguish any difference in tempo at all. I felt that I was gazing into a true abyss of superficiality—into complete emptiness.<sup>47</sup>

On the surface, this passage reflects the personal relationship between Wagner and Mendelssohn, their contrasting approaches to conducting and tempo, and the different stylistic threads of the time. But is Wagner's description of Mendelssohn that different from his portrayal of Beckmesser? Is this merely a stylistic debate, a personal rivalry, or a reflection of something more? When looked at through the lens of Wagner's "Jewishness in Music," it becomes clear that Wagner's verbal assault of Mendelssohn takes on larger aesthetic claims. Put quite simply, Wagner's critiques of Mendelssohn (or often "the school of Mendelssohn"), Meyerbeer, Ferdinand Hiller, and Joseph Joachim reflect the larger aesthetics of anti-Semitism, extended here to the realm of performance. For Wagner, Jewish performers present nothing but an artificial façade; they are more interested in attracting crowds and making money than promoting "true art." Mendelssohn's views on tempo are not merely an issue of differing taste. Rather, Mendelssohn's approach to tempo demonstrates his lack of comprehension; his (for Wagner) inability, as a Jew, to understand the truth in Beethoven's score.

In *On Conducting*, Wagner resurrected criticisms from "Jewishness in Music" but applied them to performers and specifically to the way they play. Towards the end of *On Conducting*, Wagner contrasts the "German musicians of the old style" with "up-and-coming, elegant musicians of the newer style who have emerged primarily in northern Germany from the school of Mendelssohn."<sup>48</sup> A conductor within "the school of Mendelssohn"—a term Wagner uses again and again—is described as denying "his own nature, even making himself subservient to the new laws of the elegant type of musician—laws that are so ruinous to what is truly German."<sup>49</sup> Wagner's choice of the term "truly German" can only be understood as an anti-Semitic dog whistle, as it suggests that Jewish and German identities are entirely incompatible. He continues to fold conventional anti-Semitic claims, such as laziness and willingness to value money over substance, onto their artistry and style of performance:

But just as our world of craftsmanship has remained foreign to the Jews, so did our newer music conductors fail to emerge from the ranks of our musical craftsmen. That world is anathema to our conductors, not least because they are averse to the real hard work it entails. Instead, this new type of conductor has planted himself straight at the top of our musical guild system, just like the banker sits atop our craftsmen's guilds. To this end he had to bring one thing with him from the outset that those musicians who had risen from below did not possess, or at least found it very difficult to acquire on those rare occasions when they succeeded in it. Just as the banker has his capital, so the new conductor brings learnedness with him. But this is mere superficial learnedness, not real culture, because whoever truly possesses the latter is not to be mocked. He is superior to everyone. But let us consider instead the possessor of that superficial kind.<sup>50</sup>

Turning more specifically to Mendelssohn, Wagner writes:

Mendelssohn possessed many talents, and cultivated them with earnest diligence, but it was still obvious that he never achieved real freedom. He was never able to overcome those peculiar inhibitions that the serious observer realized kept him outside our German artistic life, despite all his well-earned successes. Perhaps this even became a nagging source of anguish to him, and was what consumed his life at such an unfathomably early age. There is nothing unselfconscious about this kind of desire to become cultured. It originates not in any urge to express oneself freely, but in a compulsion to hide something from one's own nature. The culture that emerges from this can thus only be a mendacious, pseudo-culture.<sup>51</sup>

"The true German musician," Wagner continues, "has serious reason to feel resentful, because he has had to realize that these trivial pseudo-artists have the temerity to sit in judgement on

the spirit and significance of our magnificent music.”<sup>52</sup> These anti-Semitic comments replicate arguments from “Jewishness in Music” and present Jews as having no artistic temperament, as being lazy, as copying, without understanding, the culture of others, as valuing money and commerce over art.

These explicitly racist comments stem almost entirely from the end of the text. It is perhaps for this reason that these sentiments are overlooked and seen as outliers, unrelated to the “real” issue: the interpretation of music. The first two-thirds of the book appear to focus on how one should interpret music. They focus on the history of conductors and orchestras, the impact of new compositional styles on conducting techniques, the importance of finding and modifying the right tempo or sustaining the right tone. Because of this apparent separation, it has been easy and even desirable for many to write off the anti-Semitic rants as separate from and unrelated to the interpretation of music.

Yet the concluding section on Jews is *not* an outlier any more than *Der Meistersinger* is a non-political musical drama. It is *not* outside the “inner sanctum” of Wagner’s artistic vision. Rather, it serves as a culmination of a narrative that we see emerging from the opening pages. Wagner makes this point explicit when he writes that “I have already demonstrated in a few eloquent examples just how these pseudo-artists have dealt with our great German works of music.”<sup>53</sup> And should the connections between Mendelssohn’s background and the choices of a performer remain unclear, Wagner spells it out:

All that remains is for me to explain the supposedly serene, Greek meaning of [...] Mendelssohn’s urgent exhortation to just “skim through” a work. We can see this most clearly in his adherents and successors. For Mendelssohn, it was about hiding the unavoidable weaknesses of a performance, perhaps in certain cases also the weakness of the performers themselves. In his followers, however,



their pseudo-culture comes into play because their aim is to hide as much as possible, and thereby avoid any and all fuss. There is a reason for this that is almost wholly physiological, as became clear to me in a case that is not as far removed from my topic as it might seem.<sup>54</sup>

Wagner links Mendelssohn's physiology, his sense of being human, to his inability to connect to or understand German culture and German music. Earlier in the book, Mendelssohn (or "the school of Mendelssohn") comes up dozens of times (second only to Mozart and Beethoven, whose compositions Wagner discusses) and in a wide-ranging manner. At every turn, Mendelssohn and his Jewish aesthetic become the antithesis of German, Wagnerian artistry. And Wagner does this without explicitly describing them as Jewish, *because he doesn't need to*. The implication was clear to Wagner's contemporaries.<sup>55</sup> Wagner needs only criticize Mendelssohn's tempi, articulations, and dynamic contrast as a way to demonstrate, through his musical analysis, the priorities of Mendelssohn's "pseudo-culture" and his superficial understanding of the music.

He uses Mendelssohn's Jewish approach as a foil. The specific approaches to performance for each of these musicians are mapped disparagingly onto a framework of "Jewishness," a style that is deemed superficial, cosmopolitan, elegant, feminine, or subservient to capitalistic demands.<sup>56</sup> Wagner cannot frame his own aesthetic of performance and interpretation without introducing and then dispensing with a Jewish version of performance and interpretation first. Mendelssohn is Beckmesser to Wagner's Walther. Mendelssohn, as an assimilated Jew with institutional (i.e., financial) support, is indispensable to Wagner's aesthetic argument. It is not enough for Wagner to interpret Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn—he also insists that readers recognize the wrongness of the Mendelssohn school and the specific musical ways in which it sins. Almost every assertion of a "correct" interpretation comes in

response to the artistic abyss or corruptive cosmopolitan influence that Mendelssohn and ilk have used to dominate the contemporary music scene.

Let's return for a moment to Wagner's discussion of Reissiger conducting Beethoven "incorrectly," as quoted above. Wagner ends his account by describing Mendelssohn's lack of care, of heart, of interest in musical meaning: "Mendelssohn's insensitivity to this peculiar artistic instance naturally awakened doubts in me as to whether he was able to distinguish any difference in tempo at all. I felt that I was gazing into a true abyss of superficiality—into complete emptiness."<sup>57</sup> Mendelssohn and Wagner didn't simply disagree on the tempo as though the issue was individual or merely subjective. As Beckmesser reads Walther's song without "understanding," Mendelssohn and his school (whose socioeconomic status is in a way similar to Beckmesser's) perform the music of Beethoven, so claims Wagner, without the ability to capture its essence. Wagner, as listener and critic, presents himself as the truth-seer, and is able to see through the so-called superficial lies and pseudo-culture of Mendelssohn's insistence on the proper "classic-ness" of his performances. Wagner does not fault the non-Jewish Reissiger, whose performance produced the incorrect tempo. He was simply old-fashioned, a traditional Capellmeister. But his good-hearted ways were corrupted by Mendelssohn, who approved of Reissiger's distorted and false rendition of Beethoven's music.

Because the word "Jew" is never used, it has become all too easy for Wagner's defenders to presume that anti-Semitism doesn't exist or relate to the issue of music. But the racist politics in Wagner's criticism bubble to the surface for anyone willing to take a moment to attend to them. The focus on tempo and tone, the apparent "neutral" language about performance style, is nothing more than an unsubtle anti-Semitic code. More importantly, we see how the aesthetics of performance can be integrated with bigotry, where descriptions of interpretation can stand in for claims about humanity.

## THE AESTHETICS OF PERFORMANCE UNPACKED

So where does this leave us? Most engagements with Wagner's text leave readers speechless.<sup>58</sup> The vile language is pervasive and—once you know the code—unsubtle, the anti-Semitism on every other page. Readers must intentionally ignore it, write it off as mere personal insecurity, or read with the blinders of idealism that pretend there are elements to interpretation that can be separated from their context; namely, that it's only about tempo modification. And yet, most do! James Loeffler writes about why anti-Semitism in music has been brushed under the rug for so long: "There is a simple reason for this omission. We do not see prejudice because we do not wish to see it."<sup>59</sup> We ignore it because we don't want it to tarnish the music we value so profoundly.

There's a fascinating contradiction that emerges from the reception of Wagner's *On Conducting*. Conducting and the art of interpretation have remained in the margins of mainstream music history, preventing critical readings of the pervasive influence of Wagner's writings. At the same time, many have uncritically accepted the idea that a performer's identity, history, or lands of origin should determine how we read or understand a performance. Some of it, like Wagner's writings, lack subtlety. Take what the Jewish-Polish pianist Artur Schnabel wrote critically of "a Japanese who played Chopin in Japanese, [and] a Chinese who played Chopin in Chinese" when trying to celebrate the interpretation of white, European Michel Block playing the music of a Polish composer.<sup>60</sup> Comments like these, I would hope, might do more than raise a hesitant eyebrow today.

But what about the inverse: the use of racial, gendered, or nationalist stereotypes to compliment an artist? Consider, for instance, Jonathan Bellman's review of the pianist Marjan Kiepusa from 2001. Bellman's rhetoric is Wagner's when he writes that "Marjan Kiepusa, son of a Polish tenor and a Hungarian soprano, is the very antithesis of the high-profile competition winner. [His]

rhythmic understanding of Chopin [is] completely unavailable to the usual competition-winner who has managed to please the judges from every corner of the earth [...] Kiepura's Chopin is introspective, wonderfully idiomatic, and it makes a wonderful antidote to the bland, colorless, inoffensive Received Standard Chopin of the major classical labels." In addition to this comment on industry and standards, Bellman continues with Wagner's invocation of language when he writes "Kiepura speaks Chopin's Polish rhythmic language fluently, as a mother tongue," suggesting the foreignness, artifice, or superficiality of other pianists unable to assimilate.<sup>61</sup>

Bellman's Mendelssohnian foil is never specifically singled out, but the Wagnerian aesthetics are on full display in his celebration of Kiepura's interpretation. What's most troubling about Bellman's review is the manner with which he naturalizes his criteria. In other words, while his review of Kiepura is complimentary, the aesthetic criteria are ultimately the same as Wagner's and, moreover, commonplace in criticism and marketing. It is unfair, however, to throw Bellman and others like him under the bus. The aesthetic frame that Bellman uses is compelling, seductive, and easy. It has become natural to construct foils of commodity culture or to invoke cultural or national spirit to justify our love of certain performers. I am hardly the only person to have scoffed at the commercial nature of competitions, criticized musicians for "selling out," or celebrated performers' interpretations by invoking some notion of national spirit or "authenticity." The question remains, however, what collective "other" is being invoked in any of these comparisons?

When transformed into more critical readings of performers, it is all too often the case that these political, racial, nationalist, or gendered conceptions of interpretation and the aesthetics of performance are understood as neutral positions, as though it were just about the music. While anti-Semitism has hardly waned in the twenty-first century, the framework of Wagner's bigotry continues to extend dangerously and largely unchecked to other

identities who, because of their gender, national origins, or race, are perceived to be unsuited to understand the truth of “great” composers like Bach or Beethoven.

Musicologist Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has argued that musical criticism has a long history of using metaphors to conceal homophobia and misogyny as aesthetic norms.<sup>62</sup> It is critical that we learn to recognize the substance behind the coded language, even when used in a seemingly positive light. Pianist and author Sharon Su put it best when responding to critical comments disparaging the Chinese pianist Yuja Wang and her North American concert tour in 2020 in a blog entry titled “What we’re really saying when we criticize Yuja Wang.”<sup>63</sup> Critics, Su points out, make an effort to demonize Wang for her appearance and attire, which somehow corrupt the musical experience in a way that the appearance and attire of her male colleagues never would. And yet these same critics would never specifically acknowledge that they’re singling her out as a Chinese woman.

And while Su points out the implicit misogyny, many have argued that anti-Asian bigotry (not unlike Rubinstein’s comments from the 1960s cited above) continues to pervade the world of classical music. Just as Jews were perceived in the last century to lack the necessary German soul to interpret Beethoven, Asian performers or performers of Asian descent are often described as mechanical but emotionless, and only able to maintain technical proficiency without true understanding.<sup>64</sup> As Javier C. Hernández wrote for the *New York Times* in the summer of 2021, as anti-Asian hate was on the rise during the Covid-19 pandemic, “Asian artists encounter stereotypes that their music-making is soulless and mechanical. They are portrayed as exotic and treated as outsiders in a world with its main lineage from Europe. They are accused of besmirching cultural traditions that aren’t theirs and have become targets of online harassment and racial slurs.”<sup>65</sup>

These racist stereotypes are still so pervasive that they don’t need to be clearly articulated, in much the same way that Wagner

never needed to identify his characters or a certain way of playing as “Jewish.” As recently as 2005, a poster was created to promote an upcoming performance of Wagner’s “Parsifal” at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in Germany. The performance was conducted by the US conductor Kent Nagano, an established conductor who had worked in Germany for years. Invoking Nagano’s Japanese origins, the poster portrayed Wagner giving himself “slanted eyes,” a long-standing racist gesture.<sup>66</sup> Rather than unleashing outrage, the advertising firm that made the poster won a prize!

It is here that we see the confusing legacy of Wagner’s *On Conducting*. Wagner played no small part in elevating the performer as an artist whose identity was directly tied to their ability to interpret certain compositions properly or truthfully. Yet because histories and theories of music have for so long separated performance from “the music itself,” it has been easy for music critics to perpetuate varying forms of aesthetic racism when describing performers. In her work on “‘Sonic Blackness’ in American Opera,” Nina Eidsheim traces the ways that identity in performance becomes a quality that we’re taught to hear.<sup>67</sup> Eidsheim shows how critics believed that they heard an essential “blackness” in the voices of famous Black singers. Critics’ back-handed compliments used essentialized notions of blackness to celebrate performances of African-American spirituals but, inversely and in the coded language that so pervades the aesthetics of performance, found a way to explain why these singers weren’t appropriate for opera, a genre infused with a whiteness that never gets named.<sup>68</sup>

Even when a performer’s Asian, Black, or Jewish identities are not explicitly defined, that does not mean that the language used by critics to describe their interpretation is in any way neutral or merely about tempo or dynamics. Scholars and critics are starting to address the challenges we face when discussing composers’ racism, misogyny, and anti-Semitism. But we have barely begun to explore how to discuss performers and interpretations without

perpetrating Wagner-like biases. The aesthetics of performance—that is, the criteria by which critics or historians evaluate performers—is rarely examined through the lens of politics or identity, especially in classical music.<sup>69</sup> And why? In part because too many people ignored Wagner’s claim that performers and their interpretations were directly connected to the meaning and experience of music in the first place. Too many musicians and historians have similarly sought to ignore the unsubtle anti-Semitism in Wagner’s writing about conducting, and, more importantly, how Wagner’s anti-Semitism has continued to inform many dominant claims about the aesthetics of performance. Aesthetic reactions can seem subjective or abstract, and thus separate from the topic of identity politics. By exploring the foundations and myriad manifestations of critical bigotry, by reading both Wagner and contemporary criticism in a different light, we can begin the process of changing the way we read and write about the aesthetics of performance.

## NOTES

1. Philip V. Bohlman. “Musicology as a Political Act,” *The Journal of Musicology* 11, no. 4 (Autumn, 1993): 411–36.
2. Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, *The Wagner Library* 1, no. 1, accessed February 24, 2022, [https://hugoribeiro.com.br/area-restrita/Wagner-Judaism\\_music.pdf](https://hugoribeiro.com.br/area-restrita/Wagner-Judaism_music.pdf).
3. Alex Ross, “The Dark, Prophetic Vision of Giacomo Meyerbeer,” *The New Yorker* (October 15, 2018), accessed February 24, 2022, [https://hugoribeiro.com.br/area-restrita/Wagner-Judaism\\_music.pdf](https://hugoribeiro.com.br/area-restrita/Wagner-Judaism_music.pdf).
4. Accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Mendelssohn-Felix.htm>.
5. Alex Ross writes, “When scientific-sounding theories of race took hold, in the final years of Wagner’s life, Jews were categorized as biologically different from the rest of humanity. Wagner helped to propagate this racialized hatred, which came to be known as anti-Semitism. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, in *Wagner antisémite*, declares that the composer has the ‘sad privilege of being one of the first, perhaps the first,’ to make the transition between the two forms of

- anti-Judaism.” Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Wagner antisémite: Un problème historique, sémiologique et esthétique* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2015), 228, cited in Alex Ross, *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020), 234. For more on the relationship of Wagner’s views to contemporary German anti-Semitism, see Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).
6. For more on how Wagner cast a “negative other,” see David Levin, “Reading Beckmesser Reading: Antisemitism and Aesthetic Practice in The Mastersingers of Nuremberg,” *New German Critique* 69 (Fall 1996): 127–46.
  7. See Leon Botstein, “The Jewish Question in Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (December 2011): 439–53, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://academic.oup.com/mq/article/94/4/439/1184305>.
  8. See Warren Boroson, “Chopin’s Antisemitism,” *Jewish Standard* (December 25, 2009), accessed February 24, 2022, <https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/chopins-antisemitism/>.
  9. Theories abound as to when or why Wagner developed these views, often identifying his personal resentment toward Meyerbeer and the Parisian theatrical scene that didn’t embrace and celebrate Wagner early in his career. More recently, Nicholas Vazsonyi argued that his race-baiting served to promote the Wagner brand, a form of political scapegoating that continues into the 21st century. For more, see Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* and Nicholas Vazsonyi, “Playing the Race Card: Anti-Semitism and Wagner,” *Opera in a Multicultural World: Coloniality, Culture, Performance*, Mary Ingraham, Joseph K. So and Roy Moodley, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 84–96.
  10. See Robert Gutman, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968). As Alex Ross has recently written, Wagner’s anti-Semitism was previously discussed by Gutman and by T. W. Adorno before him. See Ross, *Wagnerism*, 241.
  11. Dieter Borchmeyer, “A Note on Wagner’s Anti-Semitism,” in *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
  12. See “Wagner and Ideology: Daniel Barenboim & Edward Said in Conversation,” accessed February 24, 2022, <https://danielbarenboim.com/wagner-and-ideology/>.
  13. “Whether or how Wagner’s anti-Semitic views should affect our reception of his music has been debated since his own time, particularly after the National Socialists who ruled Germany [...] appropriated Wagner’s music as a symbol



- of the best of German culture [...] Yet among his greatest advocates have been Jewish musicians, including conductors Herman Levi (who conducted the premiere of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth), Gustav Mahler, and Daniel Barenboim.” Peter J. Burkholder, Claude Palisca, Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*, 9th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 687.
14. The perceived connection between Wagner and the Holocaust can be seen most vividly in Israel. On the political context for this tension, see Na’ama Sheffi, *The Ring of Myths: The Israelis, Wagner, and the Nazis*, trans. Martha Grenzeback and Miriam Talisman (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2013).
  15. See Wilhelm Furtwängler conduct Wagner in 1942: accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt6DSyb7k8Q>.
  16. See Donald Duck in “Der Fuehrer’s Face” (1943), where Wagner’s Meistersinger Overture plays in the opening credits. Accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9osmUoSocQ&t=84s>.
  17. Craig Wright and Bryan Simms write, “There can be no excuse for the anti-Semitic element in Wagner’s writings. Still, the modern listener must evaluate Wagner’s personal failings in light of a broader range of personal and artistic factors. These include the high-minded content of his operas in general and the likelihood that Wagner would have opposed the violence inflicted upon the Jews during the Nazi period. In *Das Rheingold*, when Wotan is negotiating with the giants, his thuggish lieutenant, Donner, threatens to slay them with his hammer. Wotan—who speaks for Wagner himself—stops Donner cold. ‘Nothing through force!’ he commands.” *Music in Western Civilization* (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Schirmer, 2006), 520.
  18. In his review of Rose’s *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Hans Rudolf Vaet makes this point explicit when he writes, “What is ultimately at stake, then, is the survival and acceptance of Wagner’s musico-dramatic oeuvre as an indispensable element of Western culture.” Cited in Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 20.
  19. For one well-known exception, see Joachim Köhler, *Wagner’s Hitler: The Prophet and His Disciple*, trans. Ronald Taylor (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
  20. As Mark Evan Bonds reminds us, Wagner expressly coined the term “absolute music” to belittle the concept that there was such a thing as “the music itself” or that music could be separated in any way from the society and world around it. See *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–2.
  21. See Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* and Barry Millington, “Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in ‘Die Meistersinger?’” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3 (November 1991): 247–60.

22. David Levin, "Reading Beckmesser Reading," 129.
23. See Barry Millington, "Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in 'Die Meistersinger?'" and David Levin, "Reading Beckmesser Reading." Of Wagner's operas, *Die Meistersinger*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Des Ring des Nibelungen* have received the most scholarly attention linking Wagner's work to his anti-Semitism. See Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*.
24. For a performance of the finale, see this clip: accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6IXvPYyaEo>.
25. Accessed February 2, 2021, [http://www.murashev.com/opera/Die\\_Meistersinger\\_von\\_N%C3%BCrnb%C3%A4rg\\_libretto\\_English\\_German](http://www.murashev.com/opera/Die_Meistersinger_von_N%C3%BCrnb%C3%A4rg_libretto_English_German).
26. The conventional translation most readily available, both in print and online, is the one by Edward Dannreuther. See Richard Wagner, *On Conducting*, trans. Edward Dannreuther (New York: Dover, 1989), accessed March 1, 2022, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4523/pg4523.html>. A new translation with excellent commentary has recently emerged: Chris Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting: A New Translation with Critical Commentary* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2021), 23–108, accessed March 1, 2022, <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/36189>. All citations of Wagner's text will come from Chris Walton's translation.
27. Of Wagner's influence, José Antonio Bowen writes, "While Mendelssohn was oblivious to the original external sound of the work, he demonstrated a loyalty to both the score and the internal spirit of the work, which resulted in a performance style that attempted to be transparent by not adding external dynamic or tempo changes. Berlioz was even more specific and in addition to tempo, dynamics, and form he also considered timbre and orchestration to be essential to the integrity of the work. He called for a recreative performer, who would merely illuminate the composer's masterpiece. Wagner was in the forefront of a new attitude, whereby the performer could create, and at the same time maintain that he was returning to both the original spirit of the work and the original performance practice of the composer. Wagner, in effect, turned Mendelssohn's and Berlioz's recreative executant into the modern creative interpreter." "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: The Origins of the Ideal of 'Fidelity to the Composer'," *Performance Practice Review* 6, no. 1 (1993): 88.
28. See, for example, Richard Taruskin, "Resisting the Ninth," in *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 235–61. Over time, however, the connection between the term "Wagnerian" has taken on meanings having nothing to do with intention but, instead, focus only on dramatic changes to tempo.

29. For a sample of other authors whose writing about Wagner's conducting largely bypass or ignore the impact of anti-Semitism, see José Antonio Bowen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Dieter Gutknecht, "Richard Wagner: 'Über das [mein] Dirigiren' (1869) –Vom Einsteiger zum interpretierenden Dirigenten (2018), accessed August 23, 2021, <https://wagner-lesarten.de/bd-1-ueber-das-mein-dirigiren-1869.html>; Raymond Holden, "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way," *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (Winter 2011): 3–14; Robert Fink, "Rigorous (♩ = 126)": "The Rite of Spring" and the Forging of a Modernist Performing Style," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 2 (July 1999): 299–362; Dieter Gutknecht, "Richard Wagner: 'Über das [mein] Dirigiren' (1869) –Vom Einsteiger zum interpretierenden Dirigenten," accessed November 12, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=oBusEriaPSQ&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=oBusEriaPSQ&feature=emb_logo).
30. In his 1979 translation of "On Conducting," Robert L. Jacobs intentionally omitted Wagner's writings on anti-Semitism. Richard Wagner, *Three Wagner Essays*, trans. Robert L. Jacobs (London: Eulenburg Books, 1979).
31. See Julia Chybowski, "Jenny Lind and the Making of Mainstream American Popular Music," in *Open Access Musicology, Volume One*, eds. Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein. E-book, Amherst, Massachusetts: Lever Press, 2020. Accessed 2 Feb 2021.
32. See Michael Scott, "Adelina Patti: The Queen of Song," accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.marstonrecords.com/products/patti#tabs-2>.
33. See William J. Zick, "Thomas 'Blind Tom' Wiggins (1849–1908)," *Black Past* (February 13, 2008), accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/wiggins-thomas-blind-tom-1849-1908/>.
34. See Daniel Barolsky, "Performers and Performances as Music History: Moving Away from the Margins," in *Norton Guide to Teaching Music History*, ed. Matthew C. Balensuela (New York: Norton, 2019), 159–71.
35. For more on the concept of the musical work, see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
36. For more on notations in classical music, see S. Andrew Granade, "Cracking the Code: What Notation Can Tell Us About Our Musical Values," in *Open Access Musicology, Volume One*, eds. Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein. E-book, Amherst, Massachusetts: Lever Press, 2020. Accessed 2 Feb 2021.

37. See Sara Haefeli, "The Problem with Geniuses," *The Avid Reader*, accessed March 1, 2022, <https://theavidlistenerblogcom.wordpress.com/2020/07/24/the-problem-with-geniuses/>.
38. Even after recordings became widely available and accessible, music history texts still largely focus on composers. For more on the impact of recordings on how history is written, see Nathan C. Bakkum, "Listening to Music," in *Open Access Musicology, Volume One*, eds. Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein. E-book, Amherst, Massachusetts: Lever Press, 2020. Accessed 2 Feb 2021.
39. See Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of 'Folk Music' and 'Art Music': Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
40. See Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
41. Chris Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting*, 24.
42. *Ibid.*, 30.
43. *Ibid.*
44. By moving to the aesthetic realm, I am drawing upon the work of David Levin who, in his own work, shifts the focus away from "political or biographical" anti-Semitism. He writes: "[W]e can define an *aesthetics* of anti-Semitism in Wagner, a recurring gesture by which Wagner invests certain characters not just with vile qualities but also with vile *aesthetic practices*." David Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen: The Dramaturgy of Disavowal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 88.
45. *Ibid.*
46. See Levin, "Reading Beckmesser Reading."
47. Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting*, 47.
48. *Ibid.*, 82.
49. *Ibid.*, 83.
50. *Ibid.*, 84.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, 85.
53. *Ibid.* (*Italics mine.*)
54. *Ibid.* 85–86.
55. Of Wagner's musical works, Marc Weiner writes, "Wagner never included the word *Jude* [Jew] in his works for the stage because he didn't need to; the corporeal features deemed obvious signs of the Jew in his culture would have made the anti-Semitic nature of his representations of purportedly Jewish characteristics self-evident in his time [...]" *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 13.

56. My thanks to Thomas Yee for pointing out how Wagner uses the “feminized” descriptions of Jews and cosmopolitans as descriptive weapons.
57. Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting*, 47.
58. I'm not the first to have pointed out the presence of anti-Semitism in “On Conducting” and its later influence. The late K. M. Knittel, for instance, demonstrates the application of Wagner's anti-Semitic aesthetic to critical reviews of the conducting of Gustav Mahler, another Jew, whose performance of Beethoven was read as superficial and mannered in ways that reflected Wagnerian aesthetics and anti-Semitism. On the other hand, Knittel's observation is still the exception. See K. M. Knittel, “Polemik im Concertsaal”: Mahler, Beethoven, and the Viennese Critics,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 289–321.
59. James Loeffler, “Wagner's Anti-Semitism Still Matters,” *The New Republic* (July 4, 2014), accessed February 2, 2021, <https://newrepublic.com/article/118331/forbidden-music-michael-haas-reviewed-james-loeffler>.
60. Artur Rubinstein, *My Many Years* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1980), 559.
61. Jonathan Bellman, *American Record Guide* (March/April 2001): 82–83.
62. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance: Classical Music Performance Norms and How to Escape Them*, version 2.13, accessed November 17, 2021, <https://challengingperformance.com/the-book/>.
63. Accessed March 1, 2022, [https://doodlyroses.substack.com/p/what-were-really-saying-when-we-criticize?utm\\_source=url](https://doodlyroses.substack.com/p/what-were-really-saying-when-we-criticize?utm_source=url).
64. See Mari Yoshihara, *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music* (Temple University Press, 2007); and Mina Yang, “East Meets West in the Concert Hall: Asians and Classical Music in the Century of Imperialism, Post-Colonialism, and Multiculturalism,” *Asian Music* 38, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2007): 1–30. See also Tong Wang, “Listening with your Ears: Asian Musicians and Racial Discrimination,” *Hear Here! 2* (2011), accessed Feb 2, 2021 <https://hearhereatnec.wordpress.com/2013/04/27/listening-with-your-ears-asian-musicians-and-racial-discrimination/>.
65. Javier C. Hernández, “Asians Are Represented in Classical Music. But Are They Seen?” *New York Times* (June 21, 2021), accessed September 14, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/21/arts/music/asians-classical-music.html>.
66. Sonia Phalnikar, “Anti-Racism Groups Slam German Ads,” *DW Akademie* (July 15, 2005), accessed February 2, 2021, <https://p.dw.com/p/6v17>.
67. Nina Eidsheim, “Marian Anderson and ‘Sonic Blackness’ in American Opera,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (September 2011): 641–71. For another close reading of the sound of blackness on record, see Fred Moten, “The

Phonographic mise-en-scène,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 3 (November 2004): 269–81.

68. Kira Thurman expands on the historical context of this coded language even further in *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).
69. A recent book by William Cheng explores how the focus on musical “works” serves to erase performers and their identities. See *Loving Music Till It Hurts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), esp. 33–62.

