

CREATING A GLOBAL MUSIC HISTORY

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Abstract

The authors use the mission statement of the ICTM Study Group on Global Music History to present issues they faced in writing a global music history intended for use in schools of music (conservatories) in the United States. They argue that all global music histories will of necessity be written from some position on the globe, not from “outer space”; explain how they constructed a chronology going back thousands of years from sound recordings all made in the twentieth century; and outline their pedagogical goal of introducing music students to the full range of human music making today.

Keywords

Music history, Curriculum, Chronology, Sound recordings, Pedagogy

In 2019 we, the authors, published a global music history for music students in North American universities. It is a textbook called "Gateways to Understanding Music" (Rice and Wilson, 2019). In this essay we want to share some of the issues we faced in creating our global music history.²

We frame our remarks in relation to the four main ideas in the mission statement of the ICTM Study Group on Global Music History:

1. "to get out of Euro- and America-centric approaches [and] contribute to the gradual shift away from a Eurocentric and nationalistic history of music towards one that meets the challenges of globalisation."
2. "focus on the global interaction of regional musical cultures [creating] a global network of cross-cultural relationships"
3. "bringing together musicologists and ethnomusicologists"
4. "different research practices and views of history will also be regarded."

Our global music history is not an international scholarly project such as those created in the last decade by Philip Bohlman (2013) and Reinhard Strohm (2018). Rather, it began as what we call a situated pedagogical project. It was situated in schools of music (conservatories) in the United States. Similar to the mission of this study group, our goal was to create a music history with a global perspective.

Our perspective on global music history is not a view from outer space. It is a view from somewhere on the globe. We suppose that all global music histories will share this feature. In our case, it is a view from the United States. And it is a view from within American university schools of music (conservatories). We acknowledge that our approach to globalisation in music is American-centric and school-of-music-centric. These “centrisms” influenced the way we constructed our global music history. At the same time, we reject the Eurocentric approach to music history typically taught in American schools of music. In our book, globalisation exists both out in the world and within the United States, where people from all over the world have come to live. Its population consists of

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Native people, the descendants of European colonists and enslaved Africans, and immigrants from every part of the globe. We wrote our global music history because we believe that music students in the United States need to understand that their music history is global rather than European in scope. American music history has its roots in Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific islands, and among its Native people. This definition of American society as global in scope has been at the center of political friction in the United States for its entire history. During the last decade understandings of the nature of American society have become particularly contentious, occasionally erupting into violence. Our global music history is an intervention in current debates about the essence of American society and culture.

In a chapter in the edited collection of essays *The Cambridge History of World Music*, the ethnomusicologist Nettl (2013) points out that music and its world history have been approached in two ways: as music, that is, as a single thing, perhaps with a singular history; and as musics, in the plural, each music having its own history. In our global history we use both of these approaches to music history. We argue for the singularity of music as a basic human capacity. But we also argue that, in order to understand music as a human capacity, we must study all human music making.

The name of this study group is singular. We suppose this singularity refers to a global scholarly project that unites multiple histories told from many different perspectives: local, national, and regional. The singularity of music making as a human capacity is mediated by culture. Cultural mediation creates multiple musics, each with its own history. This process is called "historical particularism" and is associated with the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) (Harris, 1968). So while music as a human capacity is singular and provides the philosophical basis for the inclusive approach of our global music history and of the mission of this study group, music's global history must be multiple and created inductively from many particular music histories.

In normal scholarly practice, the history of a musical tradition typically begins in some place: someplace on the globe, someplace in the world. The mission statement of this study group suggests that new global music histories might profitably begin in a world region or in a constellation of traditions interacting in "global networks." The history of musical traditions also typically begins in some time: either the "ethnographic present" or sometime in the past.

Our global music history takes a different approach. It begins with another manifestation of the global: sound recordings. Sound recordings travel more easily than people through global networks. Sixty of these traveling recordings provide the basis for our global music history. All were made within the last one hundred years. To varying degrees, they all circulate in global networks and create possibilities for "cross-cultural relationships."

The recordings we chose represent all the kinds of music available to students in the United States: European classical music, jazz, American popular music, and the music of communities in the United States and abroad defined by nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion.

Basing our sixty individual histories on recordings helps to overcome the divide between oral and literate traditions. This divide has long created problems for the integration of recorded examples of the music of oral traditions made in the last century or so into histories of notated examples of European music from centuries ago. Using recordings rather than scores as the starting point for our particular histories turns our book into the history of the music of our time: the time of recorded performances of music. As the mission statement of the study group says, our approach is one way of "bringing together musicologists and ethnomusicologists." For example, our history of nineteenth-century symphonies begins with a twentieth-century recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony rather than with the nineteenth-century score of that symphony.

The next question we faced was how to order the sixty particular histories of recordings from this "age of recordings": the nearly 150 years from the earliest recordings of music in the 1890s to the present. History books nearly always move in a chronological order. But ethnomusicologists are properly suspicious of "universal," "singular" histories of music from many different places and

cultures. The field developed as a rejection of music histories that claimed that music has "evolved" in a straight line from a simple past to a complex present. In spite of this concern, we decided to retain chronology as the narrative structure of the book. We ordered our sixty particular histories of music recordings according to our understanding of human history. We placed these musical recordings in a chronological order based on when some aspect of this type of music making emerged in human history. The mission statement of the study group mentions that "different... views of history will also be regarded." Perhaps one response to this article could be a discussion of alternatives to the chronological structure we used in our global music history.

EXAMPLES FROM GATEWAYS TO UNDERSTANDING MUSIC

The remainder of this essay provides a few examples of the historical thinking that went into our selection of recordings and the way we framed their placement in the book's chronological order. First, we divided our book into three parts, each covering an era of human history. Part I of the book concerns global music history to 1500 CE, a period of about 100,000 years. The first chapter of Part I examines the music of contemporary small-scale societies, those of foragers, village horticulturists, and nomadic pastoralists. These musical traditions belong to people whom the anthropologist Eric Wolf (1982) called "the people without history," that is, people whose current cultures are not vestiges of a "primitive" past but the result of contact with Europeans since the fifteenth century. The placement of these cultures within a global history of music is particularly challenging.

The first recording in the book was made by the ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk (1998). She worked among the BaAka, a forager society in the Congo region of Africa. Foraging is the oldest extant means of human food production. So we place the music of a modern forager society at the beginning of our chronology. Here is what we write about them:

"The BaAka and other contemporary foragers do not live in the past.... They live in the modern present. ... They invent new genres of music and dance and learn new songs all the time. The ... net-hunting songs [we include in the book] became prominent when the diminishing number of elephants made spear hunting, and spear-hunting songs, less efficient than net hunting for small game. When ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk returned to visit the BaAka a decade after her original research, they were singing another new song-and-dance style. BaAka music today is thoroughly modern, but we include it at the beginning of our music history because we believe it has some iconic links to very old ways of living and making music. [...]

[...] It is possible to imagine ... that some of the principles behind their music making today are among the oldest on earth. The specific melodies and musical elements heard today in their music are not the same as they were thousands of years ago. And yet some elements of their music may be thousands of years old, including the emphasis on vocal rather than instrumental music and their performance of both solo and polyphonic singing" (Rice and Wilson, 2019: 27).

The second and third chapters of Part I of the book cover the second period of our musical chronology. We call it the "Ancient and Medieval" period. It begins around 3000 BCE with the rise of large-scale agriculture and the first cities in China, India, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. It ends around 1500 CE with the beginning of European exploration and colonization of the world. It is a period when no one civilization or empire dominated the globe. It is also the period when many of the major religious traditions emerged in human history. We include recordings of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious chant in this period of our global music history. And we also include secular music from China, the Arab world, Bulgaria, and Zimbabwe. In each case we speak of the position of the recorded example in the history of its particular tradition.

Our recording from China, for example, is of a composition for the *qin*, a seven-stringed plucked zither. Part of its history includes a 2,000-year-old sculptural representation of a *qin*-like instrument. Musical notations of compositions for the *qin* appear around the sixth century CE. The recording we chose is an instrumental composition titled "Three Variations on 'Yang Pass,'" based on an eighth century CE poem. Instrumental evocations of the poem have existed since the eighth century, but the source of this recording is a notation probably from the late nineteenth century. We place the

recording of this composition in Part I of our global music history (the Ancient and Medieval period) because compositions of this type emerged in human history at this time.



Figure 1: Small ensemble of Bulgarian traditional instruments, left to right, *kaval* (end-blown, rim-blown flute); *gaida* (bagpipe); *gadulka* (bowed fiddle); *tambura* (long-necked, plucked lute); and *tapan*, a double-headed bass drum. (Photography by courtesy of Ivan Varimezov).

This recording of Chinese music comes from a tradition with a long, written history. Some written histories, such as those from the Arab world, lack notations of compositions but they provide granular data for histories of musical practice. For the history of music transmitted in nonliterate traditions, we typically lack this granular data. This absence can be a problem for writing the histories of these traditions. For example, Bulgarian village music has been transmitted in aural tradition for more than a millennium. But historical descriptions of it only begin with a few nineteenth-century travelers' and folklorists' accounts. Our recording of Bulgarian music reflects a style of music that first appeared in the 1930s. But the instruments in the ensemble have a history with roots that extend back in time to the Ancient and Medieval period (Figure 1). The bagpipe, for example, has been a part of the life of European pastoralists for more than a millennium. The end-blown flute, the long-necked lute, the bass drum, and perhaps even the bowed fiddle entered Bulgarian culture in the wake of the invasion of Bulgarian lands by Ottoman Turks in the fourteenth century. And so we placed this recording and the history of this tradition at this point in our global music history.

Part II of our global music history is called Music History from 1500 to 1900. We examine this four-hundred-year period in five chapters. This is the period of European ascendancy in world affairs: the colonization of the Americas, Africa, India, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Asia and trading on a global scale, often enforced by military might. To mirror this feature of world history, we emphasize European music in this part of our global music history. But we do not abandon our global perspective. In each chapter of this part of our book we include a recording of a style of music that was developing at about the same time in some other part of the world, often but not always as a result of Europeans' global trade and colonization. For example, during the so-called European Baroque period from 1600 to 1750, the European string orchestra made its appearance. But so too, the large Javanese gamelan took something like its present form. A global music history might ask

why the world's two largest extant musical ensembles took shape at about the same time. Was it accidental? Or are both kinds of orchestras the product of the enormous wealth generated by European global trade and concentrated in aristocratic courts in both places? Are their histories a manifestation of "global networks" of musical exchange or of trade that generated enough wealth in both locales to patronize large groups of musicians?

Part III, the last part of our global music history, is called Music History during the Long Twentieth Century, a mere 130 years studied in six chapters. This section begins around 1890, with the sale of the first commercial recordings of music, and continues to the present. The emphasis in Part III shifts from Europe to the United States, because this is a time when America asserted its cultural, economic, and political hegemony and military might around the world. But in each of the six chapters we retain a global perspective. In each chapter of Part III we include a recording for each of the major categories we explore in our global music history: community-based music, European classical music (in Part III composed mainly by American composers), American popular music, and jazz. This helps us make the point that musicians, no matter the styles or genres they are working in, are always responding in one way or another to the cultural, social, economic, and political currents around them. For example, for the period from 1890 to 1918, our recordings include Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* from 1913 and a recording of Balinese *gamelan gong kebyar*, a musical genre whose first composition dates to 1915. The innovations in both these types of music can be explained as responses to political crises and upheavals: in Stravinsky's case, challenges to the rule of kings, Kaisers, emperors, and tsars in Europe; and in Bali the fall of the Balinese *raja* to Dutch colonial powers in 1908.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we acknowledge that our global music history is situated. It is aimed at an American audience. And so the music of the United States plays a prominent role in Part III of the history. It is aimed at university music students who mainly study European classical music. And so European music plays a prominent role in Part II of the history, a time when Europeans were disrupting cultures around the world. But its purpose is the restructuring of musical knowledge from a global perspective, a purpose our global music history shares with the mission of this study group. We suppose that all such histories will be situated somewhere on the globe.

The efflorescence of writing about the "history of world music" and "global music history" in the last decade has concerned itself principally with regional and thematic issues. One of the questions for us as music scholars to consider is whether we are ready to write music histories that are truly global in scope and chronological in structure. And if we are ready, then what forms might they take? Our book is only one effort in this direction. We look forward to reading other global music histories based on "different research practices and views of history" and written, as ours is, from particular national and regional perspectives, perspectives situated in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, and from Indigenous points of view as well.

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