Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music

Olivia A. Bloechl reconceives the history of French and English music from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth century from the perspective of colonial history. She demonstrates how encounters with native American music in the early years of colonization changed the course of European music history. Colonial wealth provided for sumptuous and elite musical display, and American musical practices, materials, and ideas fed Europeans’ taste for exoticism, as in the masques, ballets, and operas discussed here. The gradual association of native American song with derogatory stereotypes of musical “savagery” pressed Europeans to distinguish their own music as civilized and rational. Drawing on evidence from a wide array of musical, linguistic, and visual sources, this book demonstrates that early American colonization shaped European music cultures in fundamental ways, and it offers a fresh, politically and transculturally informed approach to the study of music in the early colonial Atlantic world.

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New perspectives in music history and criticism

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This series explores the conceptual frameworks that shape or have shaped the ways in which we understand music and its history, and aims to elaborate structures of explanation, interpretation, commentary, and criticism which make music intelligible and which provide a basis for argument about judgments of value. The intellectual scope of the series is broad. Some investigations will treat, for example, historiographical topics, others will apply cross-disciplinary methods to the criticism of music, and there will also be studies which consider music in its relation to society, culture, and politics. Overall, the series hopes to create a greater presence for music in the ongoing discourse among the human sciences.

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Monogenealogy would always be a mystification in the history of culture.

Derrida, *The Other Heading*
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Like other disciplines whose history is intertwined with European colonialism, musicology has long held a certain ideology of “Europe” at its core. Before the 1990s musicology was almost exclusively concerned with European classical music, and this repertory still dominates musicalogical research and pedagogy despite a broadening of its subject matter in recent years. More basic even than the object of musicological study, however, is the still limited range of assumed perspectives, or subject positions, from which music can be authoritatively historicized, interpreted, or evaluated. This is in spite of the fact that in recent years the range of acceptable methodologies and, implicitly, assumed subject positions has expanded considerably. New approaches have flourished that investigate the complex relationship between European repertoires and historical relations of dominance. However, most treat inequities based on gender, sexuality, race, or class as matters internal to European societies, when in the modern period these developed in conjunction with stratified power relations elsewhere, particularly in the colonies. While political approaches to music history that are nationally or ethnically delimited can indeed be valuable, they often do not explicitly challenge the coherence of the idea of “Europe,” or, more broadly, the “West,” that remains central to the discipline.

Yet the sense that European music can be meaningfully understood in political or cultural isolation is rooted in an ideology of Europe’s cultural autonomy and superiority that developed during the early period of Atlantic colonization, in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. This ideology served to justify colonization and the Atlantic slave trade, but it was also an anxious response to the intermingling of peoples and cultures that these processes involved. Though the most intensive Atlantic inter-cultural encounters occurred in the colonies, indigenous American and African diasporic ideas, materials, and practices of music also migrated eastward to Europe. In some cases this stemmed from the voluntary or involuntary migration of colonized individuals themselves, but it was also the product of European travel, writing, and trade in material goods. The resulting influx of American, African, and, increasingly, mixed colonial cultural practices energized artistic production in Europe, as Europeans at many social
levels developed a fascination with all things “exotic” (and as the flow of American gold and silver provided for sumptuous elite cultural production). Yet colonial inter-cultural exchange also issued a sustained challenge to the European Atlantic nations’ own politico-cultural identities, as reports and practices of music brought back from the colonies altered Europeans’ sense of human musical possibilities, including in their own societies.

Many European travelers tried to neutralize the difference they heard in indigenous American singing and instrumental performance by tracing resemblances with music or heightened sound familiar from European societies, such as the noise of charivaris or the unearthly cries of demoniacs. Such comparisons proliferated because they were ideologically effective and efficient: in one stroke they strengthened existing power asymmetries in European societies and reinforced the increasingly important fantasy of European cultural superiority relative to native American cultures. However, the strategy of aligning colonized peoples with liminal groups in the colonizers’ own societies admitted the intimacy of the kinds of cultural difference and political resistance that early European travelers encountered (or imagined) at the frontiers. This destabilized European social and political hierarchies by highlighting alternate vectors of identification. When English Protestants, for example, sensed a likeness between eastern Algonquian and Catholic ceremonial song they indicated something in the music of a liminal segment of their own society that seemed to them to resemble “savagery.” Inasmuch as Englishness was firmly associated with Protestantism in the seventeenth century, the threat felt in living cheek-by-jowl with those whose religion and sacred music marked them as veritable “savages” could be contained. Yet were Catholic Londoners not English too? If those who were English, but not quite (to borrow a formulation from Homi Bhabha), dwelled invisibly in the midst, how could “Englishness” be distinguished from its others? Colonial relations begged uncomfortable questions regarding relations of likeness and difference in colonizers’ own societies, including those that involved music-making and discoursing on music.

None of this is meant to suggest that early colonial representations of indigenous song were simply occasions for Europeans to redefine self-conceptions of their own musics (and, by extension, their own collective identities), nor that native American practitioners were passive or merely reactionary in the face of European efforts to control their performance through colonial representation and mimicry. Rather, my focus on the European aspect of colonial intercultural relations in the early modern period is meant to show that, while the violence of American colonization was overwhelmingly borne by indigenous and enslaved people, the cultural effects of colonization
Preface

were multidirectional. This does not disregard the stark disparity between, on the one hand, the devastation of colonial representations that were indirectly but powerfully implicated in acts of cultural destruction, land seizure, resource exploitation, and even genocide, and, on the other, anxieties that arose in imperial capitals in response to colonial relations. Yet it remains an underexamined historical reality that while European colonization forcibly influenced colonized peoples and cultures, the colonies also irrevocably altered Europe and its cultural production.

With this study, then, I rethink the conventional wisdom that European music in the early modern period (in musicological terms, the late renaissance and baroque periods) was essentially untouched by the proliferation of sites of “European” musical performance and discourse in the colonies or by the music (both real and imagined) of indigenous and enslaved populations. This approach—informing by the history and politics of colonial and postcolonial societies, as well as by postcolonial theory—recognizes the ideological nature of political, racial, or ethnic cultural boundaries in the early colonial period, and it questions the value of repeating these boundaries as limits for scholarship on early Atlantic music cultures. The following chapters propose instead that a past marked by foreign imperial conquest of European polities and an early modern present marked by external colonization fundamentally shaped the conditions in which European music was performed, conceptualized, heard, and composed.

I develop this argument with an awareness that the relevance of colonialism for early modern European music is rarely available as evidence of the positive sort that has historically been valued in musicology, nor even necessarily within the broader spectrum of traces considered by a hermeneutic criticism. Cultural theory thus provides necessary support for remembering music history’s ideological and instrumental relation to European imperialism, yet history’s own methods and materials are at the heart of this study. Thus, I examine traditional musicological sources like notated scores, music theory, composers’ writings, music criticism, iconography, and so forth, while also considering non-traditional sources relevant to European and American music cultures, including travel writings, religious controversial prints, demonology, prophetic writings, philosophy, and theater and costume designs. My methodological approach is similarly eclectic, drawing where appropriate on hermeneutics, criticism, music analysis, poststructuralism, and postcolonial theory. In general, I have been guided but not limited by historicism, where a rigidly historicist approach further obscures the limits of European music cultures and the human relations that were their conditions of possibility.
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In short, this book is concerned with European and Euro-American music history, but it approaches its subject in the spirit of the “subaltern history” that Dipesh Chakrabarty has proposed in his influential study, Provincializing Europe. Subaltern histories, Chakrabarty warns, will have a split running through them. On the one hand, they are “histories” in that they are constructed within the master code of secular history and use the accepted academic codes of historical writing (and thereby perforce subordinate to themselves all other forms of memory). On the other hand, they cannot ever afford to grant this master code its claim of being a mode of thought that comes to all human beings naturally, or even to be treated as something that exists in nature itself. Subaltern histories are therefore constructed within a particular kind of historicized memory, one that remembers history itself as an imperious code that accompanied the civilizing process that the European Enlightenment inaugurated in the eighteenth century as a world-historical task. It is not enough to historicize “history,” the discipline . . . The point is to ask how this seemingly imperious, all-pervasive code might be deployed or thought about so that we have at least a glimpse of its own finitude, a glimpse of what might constitute an outside to it.¹

Chakrabarty’s eloquent summary presents an ideal program for the present study, though no one book could ever hope to accomplish the deconstruction of history through its own troubled aims and means, as he envisions. Nevertheless, we may recognize a central, if only slightly more modest initial task of a postcolonial musicology in the charge to remember music history as itself “an imperious code that accompanied the civilizing process that the European Enlightenment inaugurated in the eighteenth century.” The aim of this study, likewise, is to further the ongoing process of “changing the subject” of music history, in recognition of that subject’s original pluralism.² The introductory chapter (“On colonial difference and musical frontiers: directions for a postcolonial musicology”) sets out theoretical issues involved in this historiographical revision, suggesting ways in which attention to early Atlantic colonialism can undermine the disciplinary idealization of Europe and its polities as self-contained, self-determined cultural entities. To the extent that early colonial sites of musical representation and production in Lima, Port-au-Prince, Boston, or Quebec, for example, come to seem interconnected with European metropolitan sites – and vice versa – the problem of identifying and historicizing early modern “European” music becomes irreducibly vexed, perhaps even at some level inseparable from the problems of crafting histories of music in colonial Peru, Saint-Domingue, or North America. The introduction concludes by outlining a hopeful deconstructive approach that places European music cultures in encounter with colonial situations, in order to clear a space for a more ecumenical music history.
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The succeeding chapters focus on musical encounters between early modern French and English people and indigenous people in eastern North America and, to a lesser extent, parts of the Caribbean and northeastern South America. The chapters in the first part, “Transatlantic savagery,” trace the colonial application of several distinct Protestant and Catholic discourses of music, and show how these discourses were themselves altered in their encounter with native American music. As European discourses expanded to accommodate knowledge of native American song, defining the boundary between the musics of the colonizers and the colonized became both more necessary and more fraught. Chapter 2 (“Protestant imperialism and the metaphysics of New World song”) argues that Protestants’ representations of native American song were shaped by a specifically Protestant metaphysics and politics of music that encouraged comparisons between the sacred musics of native Americans and European Catholics. The third and fourth chapters (“The voice of possession” and “The voice of prophecy”) present histories of European discourse on possessed and inspired vocality, respectively, and they analyze the structural and historical relation of these discourses to Europeans’ representation of entranced song in the colonies.

The second part, “Staging the Indian,” has a series of case studies of English and French music spectacles with characters identified as “Indians,” “Americans,” or “savages.” Each chapter traces the relationship between the musical characterization of native American figures in these spectacles and their representation in relevant contemporary discourse, including the travel writings considered in the first part. Chapter 5 (“Musicking Indians in the Stuart court masque”) surveys royal masques with Indian characters performed at the courts of James I and Charles I. Masque texts, costumes, and choreographies, together with their music, generally portrayed Indians as characters who emblematized disorder, though they also sometimes presented them as noble figures who affirmed the Stuarts’ power to bring order to Britain and its colonies. Two masques even presented noble and ignoble Indians side by side, which destabilized English aristocratic colonial ideologies in performance by juxtaposing potentially incompatible profiles of Indians. Chapter 6, “Savage Lully,” focuses on the portrayal of Indian figures in French ballets de cour and operas with music by Jean-Baptiste Lully, court composer to Louis XIV. Unlike in the English context, French colonial policy for most of the seventeenth century emphasized the political and cultural assimilation of native Americans, and I find an analogous principle of aesthetic integration in Lully’s music for Indian characters. Finally, Chapter 7 (“Rameau’s Les Sauvages and the aporia of musical nature”) looks at the last entrée of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s opera-ballet, Les Indes galantes, and the
keyboard piece, also entitled *Les Sauvages*, that served as a musical source for part of its concluding divertissement. More so than in either of the preceding case studies, French Enlightenment discourse on savagery involved a deep-seated ambivalence that disturbed philosophical efforts to determine the origin and nature of “primitive” expressive utterance. This chapter finds a structural connection between the aporia of “primitive” song that emerged in speculative philosophical writing and the uncertainties concerning music’s ontology that animated 1730s critical discourse on French opera. The chapter concludes by analyzing Rameau’s own attempts to musically characterize “savages,” which were likewise marked by a split expression whose plurality, his critics feared, implied an absence of reason at the heart of French opera itself.

I have retained original spellings in citing primary English-language sources, though I have expanded the ampersand and modernized the orthography. Citations from prose texts in other languages are given in English, with necessary excerpts from the original provided parenthetically. French original quotations are modernized only when the original spelling would mislead the reader; non-agreement of number and gender is therefore un-modernized. Poetic citations are given in the original language with English translations beneath. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
This work would not have been possible without the generosity of many people. I owe a particular debt to the exemplary scholarship and mentorship of Gary Tomlinson, who advised the Ph.D. dissertation that was the basis for this book. His writings on New World song have made room for studies like this one, and the influence of his historiographical and ethical thought is evident throughout. I also owe much to Ruth Solie and Susan McClary, who, in different ways, drew me to musicology in the first place and provided support and advice at critical points. Their respective writings on music and difference have served as humbling models for my own.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>GH</td>
<td>Rameau, Génération harmonique (1737), in The Complete Theoretical Writings of Jean-Philippe Rameau</td>
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<tr>
<td>JR</td>
<td>The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers, 1896–1901)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LWV</td>
<td>Herbert Schneider, ed., Chronologisch-themasches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Werke von Jean-Baptiste Lully (Tutzing, 1981)</td>
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