Introduction

Exoticism in music is a quality that links a work to some especially fascinating, attractive, or fearsome place: to an Elsewhere and, usually, to its inhabitants and their supposed inclinations and ways. My aim is to establish some clear guidelines about what musical exoticism is (and is not), how it functions (from the composer's point of view, the performer's, and the listener's), and what broader cultural work it carries out. By "cultural work," I am thinking of, for example, the ways in which a song, instrumental piece, or opera may reflect and reinforce Eurocentric prejudices regarding distant and different peoples; or the opposite: challenge those prejudices. (Perhaps I should say West-centric prejudices, thereby including America as part of the "center.") I focus my primary attention on what is often called Western classical music. To a lesser extent, I also consider certain streams of cultural life that tend to make less ambitious aesthetic claims, such as popular song, the Broadway musical, and film music. Within these latter "streams," I focus on instances that have attained a relatively stable version that the reader can get to know: a frequently revived Broadway musical, a successful film (with its more or less effective musical score), or the most widely available recording of a certain popular song.

Exotic and exoticism have many meanings. Those most relevant to the present study have to do with "coming from (or referring to, or evoking) a place other than here." This basic core of meaning follows logically from the etymological root "exo-" ("outside of" or "away from"). I shall return to the implications of the phrase "musical exoticism" at the end of this Introduction and shall propose a new definition of it in Chapter 3.

There have been occasional calls for a comprehensive study of exoticism in Western music.[1] The repertoire that would need to be covered, however, is vast. Composers have evoked a near-endless variety of distant and disparate worlds and peoples: Incas of Peru, Scottish bards, Tyrolean villagers, the Hungarian Roma ("Gypsies"), characters from the ancient and biblical Middle East, pashas and casbah dancers (standing for a Middle East of more recent vintage), sub-Saharan Africans (including, in two notable cases, Madagascans),[2] Chinese princesses – and, of course, one

Japanese geisha, Puccini's Cio-Cio-San (*Madama Butterfly*), whose suicide is bewept, in production after production, by opera lovers around the world.

Like *Madama Butterfly*, many exotic works are permanent items in the concert and opera repertoire. Put another way, exoticism has been a recurrent, defining force in the growth and elaboration of Western art music and its canon of performed works. Yet the exotic aspects of many patently exotic (or, one might say, exoticist) works have often been insufficiently examined, as has the relationship between those exotic aspects and such matters as the work's style and structure; its reception by audiences at the time the work was first performed; its dependence on works (exotic and not) of earlier composers; and its influence on works (exotic and not) of later ones.

Broader issues and developments may likewise bear on an exotic work and its meanings in its own day. These include the structures of musical life, general social and cultural contexts, and what, at the time, was known – or believed to be true – about the region being portrayed, including its musical practices.[3] Then there are the new meanings that accrue to a work over time.

How to structure a book on a topic that has so many different facets, none of which it has the space to treat comprehensively?

The four chapters that make up Part I explore, in essayistic fashion, various terms, concepts, and themes relating to the problem of musical exoticism. Chapters 1 and 2 lay the conceptual groundwork for Chapter 3, in which I define musical exoticism afresh and propose a broader-than-usual methodology for studying it. Chapter 4 expands on some particular complications, such as the (perhaps counterintuitive) overlap between musical exoticism and musical nationalism. Chapters 5–10 then illustrate how exoticism has manifested itself (whether overtly or not) across the past three centuries in various genres and works central to Western music. These chapters also suggest at times how musical exoticism has contributed to the definition, growth, and elaboration of the larger enterprise of Western music, and thereby to Westerners' sense of who they are and of their relationship to the rest of the world. The Epilogue (Chapter 11) focuses on the enriching and sometimes problematic place of exotic musical works – including many from decades or even centuries past – in today's musical life.

Throughout, it is my contention that music critics and musicologists have adopted too exclusively what I call the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm of musical exoticism, which regards established stylistic codes as the main or even sole factor in the process of exotic portrayal. Some of the most sophisticated studies of musical exoticism or of particular exotic works – as

well as many textbooks and shelves' worth of concert- and opera-program notes – state or imply that the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm tells the whole story of how exoticism can be conveyed in a musical work. (In Figure 3.1, I lay out the main types of codes or features that the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm isolates as markers of the exotic in Western music.)

As I have come to see it, musical exoticism is not "contained in" specific devices. Rather, it arises through an interaction between a work, in *all* its aspects, and the listener. I therefore have developed a broader approach, which I half-humorously call the "All the Music in Full Context" Paradigm. This more inclusive Paradigm accords well with the insights of various theorists and aestheticians who, in recent decades, have emphasized that the reception (in its fullest sense) of works of literature and visual art is inevitably mediated by a variety of clues. In exotic musical works, some clues are musico-stylistic (whether recognizably exotic – and thus fitting the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm – or not). Other clues, especially in genres such as opera, are verbal and visual. In addition, exotic musical works are, like all art works, mediated by cultural preconceptions that may be less concrete than the various clues just mentioned but no less real. Responses to exotic works with a substantial musical component are – like all forms of knowledge (taking that word in the broad sense) – "situated": that is, they are shaped by such basic factors as social and cultural context, community values, and the experiences and attitudes of the individual listener. Although some aspects of the works and their meanings are relatively fixed, others are constantly open to negotiation. These "images" of Elsewhere – these often-distorted "reflections" of reality (I highlight the terms from this book's subtitle) – call forth ever-new "reflections" in the other sense of that word: reactions, commentaries, statements of value, and decisions about which exotic works to maintain in the repertoire and how to perform them.

It may help to lay out the structure of the book in somewhat more detail. Chapter 1 (the beginning of Part I) broadly explores music's relationship to culture and history, and concludes with a brief glance at existing accounts of musical exoticism. Chapter 2 examines how exoticism has been regarded by prominent composers and critics, including Wagner, Debussy, Schoenberg, Heinrich Schenker, Steve Reich, and Richard Taruskin. It also considers applications of the much-debated term "Orientalism" to music. "Orientalism" has for more than a century been understood by literary and art historians as indicating the variants of (literary and artistic) exoticism that deal with "the East": the Arab world, Turkey, Persia and other countries of Central Asia,

the Indian subcontinent (with its vast Hindu and Muslim populations), and all of East and Southeast Asia. But, ever since Edward W. Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*, the term has been understood by historians and cultural critics as indicating a much more "real-world" phenomenon: the ideologically supported system by which the West, for centuries, dominated large parts of the non-Western world (especially the Middle East, India, and East and Southeast Asia). I felt the need to sort out the ways in which this heavily political (and sometimes politicized) use of the term Orientalism has and has not proven helpful for discussions of exoticism in music. The chapter concludes by raising some ethical questions about the condescending and sometimes defamatory ethno-cultural stereotypes upon which so many musical representations of the Other rely.

Chapter 3 presents a new, broader way of studying and thinking about exotic works: the aforementioned "All the Music in Full Context" Paradigm. I define this new paradigm as extremely broad and as incorporating the prevailing "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm. Had I proposed the new paradigm as a non-overlapping alternative or complement (say, the "Non-Exotic Style Only" Paradigm), I would have created the problem of policing the boundary between exotic and non-exotic style. I believe that such policing is pointless. There is no boundary. As we shall see repeatedly in the case studies of Chapters 5–10, exoticness often depends not just on the musical notes but also on their context as well as on other factors, such as the particulars of a given performance and the musical and cultural preparation of a given listener.

Chapter 4 explores the inherent overlaps – and disparities – between and among such categories as musical exoticism (including its Middle Eastern and other "Oriental" variants), musical nationalism (e.g., a Russian composer consciously trying, on a given occasion, to sound Russian), and various longstanding and arguably non-representational uses of national styles (as in Bach's Italian Concerto for harpsichord). The chapter concludes by exploring more extensively than did Chapter 2 the question of (often noxious) stereotypes.

Chapters 5–10 – which make up the bulk of Part II – survey some major developments in musical exoticism in rough chronological order from 1700 to the present. They also pause for discussion of significant representative works. The proportion between these two methods of organization varies from chapter to chapter. In Chapter 5, two extended case studies (Handel's *Belshazzar* and the portrayal of the Incan priest Huascar in Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*) are introduced and linked by briefer summaries of relevant trends in musico-exotic portrayal at the time. A somewhat similar structure

prevails in Chapter 6 (the two works are Mozart's "Rondo alla turca" and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 14, the latter giving evidence of a complex relationship between "Hungarian-Gypsy" exoticism and Hungarian nationalism) and in Chapter 7 (focusing on "Spanish-Gypsy" characters in Verdi's *Il trovatore* and Bizet's *Carmen*). Chapter 8 explores – in varying degrees of detail – operatic works set in "the Orient" by eight composers. It focuses particularly on neglected or misunderstood aspects of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss the (evidently, or at least arguably) exotic explorations and experiments of an even greater number of composers than does Chapter 8. But they, too, pause at times to consider in somewhat more detail a few works that prove to be particularly rich or complex, notably (in Chapter 9) Debussy's *Pagodes* and *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune*, Bernstein's *West Side Story*, and the famous *chanson* "Petite Tonkinoise," as sung by Josephine Baker; and (in Chapter 10) two works by Tan Dun: *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Mankind* and *Marco Polo*.

I have just said that the works discussed in Part II are representative. Perhaps a better word would be "indicative." The two works in Chapter 5 – by Handel and Rameau – are unique creations and cannot fully stand for other works about non-Western tyrants, much less for works built upon very different (yet unquestionably exotic) plots.[4] Nonetheless, the figure of the tyrant has long been so central to Western conceptions of non-Western regions that it seemed to me important to explore its musical manifestations, especially since Baroque-era Oriental-tyrant operas and oratorios have often been omitted from, or minimized in, previous accounts of musical exoticism.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8, taken together, consider certain peoples that were conjured up with particular frequency by European culture during the long nineteenth century (*c.* 1780–1915): the Roma of Hungary and Spain, and the inhabitants of various regions regarded as Oriental, including ancient Egypt; the Arab world (as described in the *Thousand and One Nights*); the Ottoman Empire; legendary China and India; and current-day Japan. (Consistent with the practice among social and cultural historians, I use the word "Gypsies" to indicate fictional and stereotypical images of the Roma. As with terms such as "Oriental" and "Turkish style," the word will generally appear without quotation marks except when there is some risk of ambiguity.[5]) The specific Gypsy and (broadly) "Eastern" works to be explored are among the best-known and most indelible in the repertoire. I have welcomed the opportunity to discuss their exotic portrayals in some detail.[6] The resulting panorama would have been somewhat different if more of the works chosen for discussion had focused on certain other

peoples: for example, Scots, Tyroleans, Poles, Russians, Native Americans, African-Americans, sub-Saharan Africans, or peoples from various Latin American countries. The reader is directed, in the notes and Bibliography, to excellent studies that can round out the picture.[7]

Chapters 9 and 10 (dealing with the long twentieth century) take a somewhat different approach, and for a reason. Whereas there is probably general consensus that the works discussed in Chapters 5–8 are indeed exotic portrayals, beginning around 1900 – in works such as *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Pagodes* – the problem of musical exoticism becomes drastically more complex. The Western musical world's interest in and contact with other cultures increased greatly, with the predictable result that composers, to a much greater extent than before 1900, incorporated aspects from far-flung musical traditions in their works. What is less predictable is that they now did so in works of many kinds, not just ones that set out to portray or represent a distant people. And the same occurs with musical materials (e.g., the octatonic scale) that had been invented by previous Western musicians and associated with exotic realms: they become more broadly diffused in Western musical language. Thus, whereas, in Chapters 5–8, we often see exoticism carried out through non-exotic means, in Chapters 9–10 we encounter something of the opposite: non-exotic (or arguably non-exotic) pieces that use musical materials borrowed from distant countries or at least (if invented, not borrowed) long linked with the exotic.

In an attempt to suggest this blurring boundary between exotic and non-exotic and the resulting variety of approaches to the problem of representing distant cultures (and/or of borrowing from them), I propose near the beginning of Chapter 9 three new categories: Overt Exoticism (which roughly amounts to what the previous chapters have simply called "musical exoticism"), Submerged Exoticism, and Transcultural Composing. These categories suggest the range of options for composing music in an increasingly globalized world. They also indicate some ways in which unfamiliar, even initially off-putting musical materials and conceptions gradually reshaped mainstream musical vocabulary and other compositional practices in the West. Nonetheless, once I have established these categories in the first half of Chapter 9, I feel no need to keep mentioning them in the remainder of that chapter nor in Chapter 10 (dealing with 1960 to today). Instead, I mostly allow them to linger in the reader's mind as a grid of possibilities against which he or she may wish to evaluate the numerous instances of musical exoticism that we encounter in the past century-plus.

Chapters 9 and 10 raise another new complication: who is a Westerner? I draw attention to some composers who were born and trained in countries distant from New York, Paris, or Berlin: for example, in Brazil, Egypt, Iran, the Tatar Soviet Republic, Japan, and China. The output of many of these composers posed (or poses) interesting questions of cultural identity when heard in North America and Europe (often as a result of the composer's settling in a major Western metropolis or visiting it frequently). I also discuss more countries or regions than in earlier chapters (including some – such as Brazil – that are Western yet often regarded as exotic/peripheral in North America and Europe) and more genres and streams of music-making, including popular song and film music. Even so, no claim is made toward comprehensiveness. As in Chapters 5–8, the notes and Bibliography will guide interested readers to fine studies on topics that are here treated briefly (such as the Asian roots of American experimentalists Cowell and Cage).

The works explored at some length in Chapters 5–10 come from many different genres: piano works, orchestral works, a sacred dramatic oratorio, a Broadway musical, some French and American popular songs, some film scores, and operas of several distinct varieties. All these works are also unusually communicative, demonstrably long-lived, and available on one or more excellent recordings or (for stage works) video recordings.[8] Some have been discussed extensively (if not always adequately) by scholars and critics as instances of musical exoticism: for example, *Les Indes galantes*, "Rondo alla turca," *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Pagodes*. Others have been much more briefly examined (if at all) in this regard: for example, *Belshazzar*, *West Side Story*, and the *chanson* "Petite Tonkinoise."

Some people express surprise when I suggest that a work such as *West Side Story* can be interestingly linked to the concept of musical exoticism. What is exotic, these people argue, must be far away from "here," whereas Puerto Ricans in Manhattan are, of course, just around the corner (from the presumed audience members, and also from the Jets, the non-exotic half of the show's cast). But "internal Others" – including Puerto Ricans in the USA during the 1950s and, a century earlier, Rom fiddlers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire – have been exoticized (by the society's dominant population) no less than cultures that lie across an ocean. In addition, a work that evokes the composer's homeland and its music – a Chopin mazurka, Albéniz's piano suite *Ibéria*, or Takemitsu's *November Steps* for *biwa*, *shakuhachi*, and orchestra – can easily gain in exotic fascination when performed abroad.

Certain case studies in Chapters 5–10 echo each other. Recurring musical treatment of New World "natives," the Roma (Hungarian and Spanish), and

peoples of the Middle East (ancient and current-day) and of East Asia (again, ancient/legendary and recent) permits the positing of comparisons and contrasts. Sometimes the influence of one repertoire item (e.g., Mozart's "Rondo alla turca") is noted. Sometimes an issue will recur in discussion of two very different works: for example, do *West Side Story* and Tan Dun's *Marco Polo* both envision – indeed, enact in some ways – an end to musical exoticism? Most of all, the reader will sense my abiding concern to distinguish – explicitly or implicitly – between cases that can be largely encompassed by the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm (the "Rondo alla turca" being one such case) and cases that need the broader "All the Music in Full Context" Paradigm to do them justice (such as various Baroque-era dramatic works, or long stretches of *Carmen* and *Madama Butterfly*).

The Epilogue (Chapter 11) discusses why and how works that are colored to some degree by musical exoticism matter to musicians and audiences today – and sometimes trouble them. Among other things, it explores the ways in which certain operas have been reconfigured in different recent productions, and how they might profitably be reconfigured in the future, not just on stage but also in the mind of the thoughtful audience member.

Before closing this Introduction, I would like to raise several distinctions – familiar and unfamiliar – that underlie the entire book, and to offer several other preparatory comments that are crucial to understanding what musical exoticism is and how it functions in Western culture (or what we might call globalized post-industrial culture, in order to bring into consideration the musical publics of, say, Tokyo, Singapore, Mumbai, and Tehran).[9]

The first two distinctions are familiar and intertwined. Scholars and critics have regularly distinguished between, on the one hand, exotic styles that are closely derived from musical practices of the society being portrayed and, on the other, styles that are meant to register as exotic but have, in fact, been largely invented by Western musicians. Related to this first familiar distinction is a second: between, on the one hand, cultures whose musical traditions are (or were, at the time) relatively familiar to Western composers and audiences and, on the other, cultures whose musical traditions are not (were not) and so cannot (could not) be reliably alluded to. For example, the music-making of the Rom ("Gypsy") fiddle bands became familiar to Western composers and audiences earlier than did many other "foreign" musics. Also, this "Gypsy" music was particularly easy for Westerners to understand and assimilate because, over the centuries, it had absorbed much from its interactions with various European musical traditions. By contrast, East Asian and sub-Saharan musics were largely unknown during

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even in Paris, never mind in somewhat less cosmopolitan cities, such as Milan or Munich. Composers have thus been forced (or, in a sense, freed) to invent musical materials that could somehow be perceived as acceptably Other. True, Puccini, when preparing to compose *Turandot*, ended up transcribing Chinese tunes played by a music box, including the recurring Mo-Li-Hua tune ("Jasmine Flower"). But this hardly amounts to a rich encounter with a living tradition.[10] Equally typical in *Turandot* is Liù's aria "Tu che di gel sei cinta," for which the composer simply invented a tune that, to his ear, had what he called a "Chinese flavor" (*sapore cinese*). Most listeners and critics would have had trouble – and would have trouble today – distinguishing the echoes of "the real thing" in this opera from moments marked by a pseudo-Chinese spice.

When I say that the Chineseness of Liù's aria is "pseudo" (implying fake, manufactured), I do not mean that the effect is not beautiful or dramatically apposite. I wish to distance myself from the tendency to suggest that invented exoticisms are somehow invalid in music, as if the composer were too lazy or too culturally narrow to offer the listener something more authentic. We should remember that invented exoticisms are central to exoticist traditions in other arts. Frederick N. Bohrer offers a valuable observation regarding the many paintings that attempted to open a window on one famously hidden-away aspect of the Islamic Middle East: the harem:

> Nineteenth-century Western exoticism is replete with such almost completely imaginary representations as the eroticized harem and the odalisque . . . [that scarcely resemble] anything in contemporary Eastern realities . . . Such images . . . largely imitate each other in their putative reference to Eastern practice, but they [nonetheless] belong just as much to the exoticist corpus. They refer to the East without precisely imitating anything of it.[11]

Bohrer's remark may remind us of what the philosopher and cultural theoretician Michel Foucault calls the "archeological" nature of all cultural (including political) discourse. A given generation of writers relies on the writings of the generation or two that came before it (what we might call, taking Foucault's "archeological" image literally, the stratum just below). The writers rework and transform for their own purposes what they find written. They do so with (most often) the professed and sincere aim of discovering a solid, durable image that closely matches reality (or, in Foucault's term, an image that "deciphers" reality). But what they produce may instead meet an unspoken societal goal of which the writer or artist is barely aware: *inventing* a version of reality. This version of reality may be, on the surface, consolingly "continuous" (which, for Foucault, means, among

other things, internally consistent). Yet, at a deeper level, it may function to "exclude" from general awareness any phenomena that are felt (at that time and place) to be too threatening or "discontinuous." Particularly forbidden to delineate, often, is the repressive power of the society in which the writer lives and operates.[12]

Educated people know that discursive statements and representations are largely invented by people (at a certain point in time and space) and ought always to be treated with skepticism. Few would confidently turn to centuries-old history books, physics treatises, or medical advice. But literature and the arts are different. Even though we know that their images of some real-world locale are primarily imagined, we feel no cause to demean the work that contains them since, after all, accuracy is not the point. The wording in the previous sentence points to a tautology: "images" (that word, again, from the book's subtitle) are frankly "imagined." But, unlike a tautology in logical argument, which invalidates the claims being made, this tautology of the imagined image is fundamental to literature and the arts and is inherently productive. Art often flourishes, perhaps flourishes best, when freed from the expectation that it closely reproduce reality (that it "decipher" it) in a documentary manner or, as art historians might say, in a photo-realist one.

Another distinction is much less familiar in discussions of exotic musical works but no less crucial: the distinction between, on the one hand, music whose style itself is understood as exotic, in that it reflects another culture's *music* (or at least reflects the perception of that music by the composer and his/her audience); and, on the other, music that portrays the other *culture* itself (as a whole). Representing (however inaccurately) a culture's *music* is, essentially, the core of the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm. Representing (however inaccurately) the *culture as a whole* expands the scope to include much that the "Exotic Style Only" Paradigm leaves out of consideration. This is what makes the "All the Music in Full Context" Paradigm adequate to a wider range of works and musical passages. A composer of an exotic work often characterizes a place, culture, people – however half-imaginary – with all the stylistic tools in his/her *regular* (non-exotic) compositional kit, or else with a combination of exotic tools and non-exotic ones.

The process of using regular, non-exotic musical means to portray an exotic culture is particularly apparent in opera:

- Handel, in *Tamerlano* (1724), portrays the Tatar tyrant Tamburlaine (Timur-Leng) as monstrously vicious, yet does so with little or no recourse to stylistic devices or mannerisms intended to resemble those of actual Eastern literary or musical traditions.