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PART I

Introduction: a rich and complex heritage

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1 Images and principles

Images of Otherness

This book tells two intertwined stories that have long needed to be told. It tells how Western music, during the years 1500–1800, reflected, reinforced, and sometimes challenged prevailing conceptions of unfamiliar lands – various Elsewheres – and their peoples. And it also tells how ideas about those locales and peoples contributed to the range and scope of musical works and musical life in the West (that is, in Europe and – to a lesser extent – its overseas colonies). For the most part, the book explores the ways in which those places and peoples were reflected in what we today consider musical works, ranging from operas and dramatic oratorios to foreign-derived instrumental dances such as a *sarabande* for lute or guitar. But it also explores other cultural products that – though not "musical works" – included a significant musical component: products as different as elaborate courtly ballets and cheaply printed ballads.[1] My previous book, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*, examined many of the same issues, but – aside from a chapter and a half on eighteenth-century developments – it restricted itself primarily to the period from 1800 to the present day.[2] Thus the present book, in focusing on the years 1500–1800, amounts to a sort of "prequel."

Some of the places considered exotic by Europeans during that three-hundred-year period were relatively near home (e.g., Spain, often considered exotic by its neighbor to the north, France); others were far away (e.g., Turkey, China, or the Americas). In addition, two highly distinctive ethnic groups living in Europe – Roma ("Gypsies") and Jews – were often viewed as exotic (not-Us) by the mainstream population and by church and government officials. [3]

The whole topic of how "the exotic" (e.g., borrowed musical elements from – and, more generally, exoticist conceptions of – various Elsewheres) functioned – and today function – in music and musical life was largely ignored until a few decades ago.[4] By now, there is an extensive and ever-growing

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literature. Still, the best studies of the topic have – for reasons to be explained in this chapter and Chapter 2 – omitted certain major repertories from the years 1500–1800: notably, operas based on ancient Greek or Roman tales about Eastern potentates; operas and ballets about Crusaders (Christians) struggling with Saracens (Muslims); and oratorios and other Christian religious-themed works set in or alluding to the Holy Lands (the ancient Middle East).[5] Some of these works are relatively well known to listeners today, e.g., Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Armide*, George Frideric Handel's *Serse* (in which Xerxes, the ancient Persian conqueror, sings the famous "Largo"), *Rinaldo*, and *Giulio Cesare*; Gluck's *La rencontre imprévue* (*Les pèlerins de la Mecque*); and – among religious works – Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *David et Jonathas*, Johann Sebastian Bach's *Passion According to Saint John*, Handel's *Solomon*, and (with its exoticized portrayal of Holy Land shepherds) that same composer's *Messiah*.

Certain of these works, when relatively new, were played by hundreds or thousands of amateur musicians or heard (and, for the theater works, seen) by cumulatively thousands of audience members, whether local or visiting from other lands. [6] In some of these – e.g., Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio, i.e., Harem) and his "Rondo alla turca" (the final movement of the Keyboard Sonata in A, K331) – the work's relationship to the topic of "the exotic in music" is and always has been immediately evident. That is, listeners have long recognized that a current non-European land or people was (or is) being represented, whether on stage or in purely instrumental terms. These and other familiar works, as well as less-familiar pieces – remarkable ones by such accomplished composers as Buxtehude, Grétry, and Salieri – are here incorporated into the oft-told story of "music and the exotic" for the first time in any detail, and in some cases for the first time at all.

The importance of the exotic in the history of Western music derives from a number of factors relating to realms beyond the strictly musical, including the following:

- Broad historical developments, such as the centuries-long history of military struggles and mercantile relationships between the Ottoman Empire and Europe; the threats (real and perceived) of North Africa-based pirates to trade and travel; Europe's mind-expanding discovery of – and growing domination of – peoples with extremely diverse customs in the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and East and South Asia; musical interactions resulting from the transatlantic slave trade, whether in ports, on plantations, or in cities (e.g., mulatto guitarists in

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Brazil);[7] Europeans' recurring obsession with certain minority populations residing within Europe (notably the aforementioned Roma and Jews); and shifts in officially promulgated categories – e.g., the formulation of a concept of genetic "racial" inferiority – that permitted certain of these developments to occur.[8]

- The use of events from biblical Judaea and Israel (e.g., the conquest of Canaan) to justify a wide range of religious beliefs and governmental policies and actions.[9]
- The wide dissemination (in the original Italian and in translation) of sixteenth-century verse epics by Ariosto and by Tasso about eleventh-century Christian knights struggling against "Saracens" (e.g., Muslim troops in Spain and the Holy Land).[10]
- The equivalent dissemination of ancient Greek and Roman writings about peoples living in "the East." Literate Europeans – church and government officials, composers, librettists, audience members – often took those writings as usable descriptions of a current-day foreign population located on or near the same distant terrain.[11] For example, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, noted clerics and historians, including the bishop of Siena (the future Pope Pius II), debated which of several ancient "barbarous" peoples attested in ancient writings – the Trojans, Persians, or Scythians – was the true progenitor of the conquering Turks and resembled them most closely in character and behavior.[12]

The present book places musical works and music making into relation with major events and developments such as those just mentioned. It offers some likely meanings for well-known pieces of music and for long-forgotten ones.[13] And it explores the ways in which representations of peoples regarded as more or less exotic (distant and different from Us) contributed to the development of musical, dramatic, and expressive possibilities in opera and many other sorts of music-assisted cultural products. In all these ways, the book seeks to contribute to two important and complementary interdisciplinary projects: bringing music into discussions of world history, and bringing world history into discussions of music.

Trends and instances

Writing this book has been a covertly collaborative project: my attempt at synthesizing previous work while also also viewing matters from a new angle.

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Numerous scholars in musicology and cultural history have written pathbreaking discussions of genres and repertoires studied here. Yet they often give little emphasis to the exotic aspect. For example, books on seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian-language opera and operatic life emphasize opera's institutional structures, commercial grounding, and nascent musico-dramatic conventions. These books rarely discuss how the frequent preference for distant locales (e.g., ancient India or Babylonia) interacted with those aspects.[14] Similarly, a recent monograph surveys intense onstage events that occur in many French Baroque operas (earthquakes, shooting stars, infanticides). Yet – as that book leaves largely unmentioned – the locale being portrayed is frequently an exotic one, a fact that can significantly alter the implications of a given event or "cataclysm."[15]

Fortunately, insightful studies have been devoted to the exotic aspects of one or another important work (as will be noted in a moment) or to a group of works (such as Venetian opera libretti featuring Persians).[16] Still, there have been few if any attempts at articulating some basic trends and issues as manifested in a wide range of genres and works.[17] Among the more important trends that we will be noting are those listed in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1 Trends in musical exoticism, 1500–1800

1. The active and often increasing use, across the three centuries, of exotic locales, situations, and characters (e.g., from the Bible, ancient history, or the aforementioned chivalric tales by Ariosto and Tasso) to delight and astonish – or even to create a pleasurable sense of fear and then allay it through catharsis or ridicule. On this most basic level, the exotic becomes one more set of options – along with such long-familiar items as tales of witchcraft and myths about supernatural creatures – for the creation of forms of entertainment and diversion: options that, being distant from everyday reality, did not expose the work's makers to the accusation of having commented directly or subversively on government policies, ecclesiastical matters, or specific living individuals. (This distance did not, however, prevent exotic subjects in a given work from being read as commenting on such matters *indirectly*, as we shall repeatedly see.)[18]
2. From the late seventeenth century onward, increasingly concrete exotic (and, more generally, ethnic) references in the plots, costumes, and staging of ballets and operas and in the sung words of operas. The specificity may not, of course, have

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Box 1.1 (cont.)

been particularly accurate: a 1763 illustration of Thomas Arne's English opera *Artaxerxes* shows the ancient Persian ruler – son of Xerxes the Great – in modern-day Turkish- or Arab-style robe and turban.[19]

3. A wide range of portrayals (in opera and elsewhere) of people in rural locales. Some of these continued the centuries-old tradition of the literary pastoral (which generally amounted to an idealized version of courtly culture). But others were based on a perception, widely shared among people in many cities and courts, that country folk were somehow simpler than they, hence more likely to break out into song and dance. Such rural portrayals could carry exotic implications, especially to people living in some other European land (e.g., portrayals of Scottish herders or Swiss mountaineers, confected for theatergoers in Paris or Vienna).[20] A related trend – but one that will mostly not be treated in the present book – was the enjoyable feeling of amusement (superiority, etc.) that people in a cultural center could have toward people *living in some corner of their own land* whom they understood as being provincial or as speaking a comical dialect: e.g., Italian *frottole* and *commedie dell'arte* that made fun of people from the northern town of Bergamo; or the inclusion of comic characters from Gascony, in the south of France, in Molière and Lully's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*.[21]
4. A tendency toward treating allegorically the various peoples in musico-dramatic works. In the case of many works with religious themes (e.g., oratorios and sacred operas), this usually meant equating the biblical Hebrews with "us" and equating the Hebrews' enemies (e.g., ancient Babylonians) with "our" current-day religio-political opponents. [22] These (unnamed) opponents could range from Ottoman Muslims, who had conquered much of southeastern Europe by the year 1500, to citizens of one's own land, such as, in certain works composed in England during the two centuries after Henry VIII's break with Rome, fellow English people who were agitating for the nation's return to Catholicism. In certain operas and other secular works Muslim characters demonstrably served as a safe "mask" behind which to ridicule the king or the Christian clergy.[23]
5. An increasing trend – particularly evident in eighteenth-century Paris and Vienna – toward reflecting exotic locales through distinctive musical devices (whether borrowed from the foreign culture or invented).[24] This occurred most obviously in compositions employing a dance-type that carried exotic associations at the time (e.g., the *moresca* or the *chaconne*) but also in compositions employing rhythmic, harmonic, and other musico-stylistic features – such as drone bass or "reverse" dotted rhythm – associated with a distant land or people (e.g., Poles, Hungarians/"Gypsies," Spaniards, Turks).[25]

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Box 1.1 (cont.)

6. Almost the opposite trend: works that reflected, and arguably reinforced, Western perceptions of exotic locales and peoples but did so without making use of dance references, musical borrowings, invented musical codes, or stylistic oddities.
7. The increasing use of exotic musical devices in pieces that offer little if any verbal evidence that the composer was intending a reference to some exotic subject matter. This can lead to ambiguity about whether the composer intended an exotic effect (e.g., whether the percussion parts in a symphonic work indicate Ottoman troops or simply ethnic-neutral "military style").

Trends 5, 6, and 7, taken together, suggest a crucial question: "Must the music of an exotic work sound foreign or, at the least, odd?" Or, as semiotically inclined observers might put it, "Must the music of an exotic work employ distinctive musical 'signs,' *topoi*, or topics?"[26] Chapter 2 will explore this question in some detail.

One "trend" not listed in Box 1.1 (though implied in trends 5–7) is Europe's increasing contact with, and written reactions to, non-European musical traditions. This important development marks the beginning of the scholarly field that would become known as ethnomusicology and also of today's fascination with traditional musics of the world's peoples and with a highly commodified offshoot: "world music" (e.g., blendings of non-Western traditions and North American pop). This growing awareness of non-Western musics will be treated only briefly in the present book because published descriptions and transcriptions of, say, Chinese music had little or no echo in Western musical works that evoked the respective land or people (e.g., Gluck's *Le cinesi*).[27] The primary exceptions are the *alla turca* style and various foreign dance-music styles.[28] (Even less will the book address the reverse trend: the introduction of Western musical practices into non-European lands.)[29]

Inevitably, in a book that treats three centuries and many contrasting genres, I have had to concentrate on a relatively small selection of works (and "non-works," such as courtly ballets). I have focused on ones that illustrate major themes and issues and that – for the most part – are available in a reliable modern edition and in at least one relatively expert performance on CD or DVD (see the Bibliography, Section III). I also briefly mention other major works that the reader may wish to explore: e.g.,

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Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (*c.* 1624), about a Crusader knight and his beloved Muslim woman-warrior, whom he – not recognizing her – mortally wounds in battle; Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (first performed in 1689 or possibly earlier), about the legendary queen of Carthage (a maritime power in what is today Tunisia); and Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), about a Greek princess trapped in a hostile Eastern land near the Black Sea.

Certain works to be discussed have generated an extensive literature: e.g., Lully's *Armide* and the Lully-Molière *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and *Samson*, and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and *Così fan tutte*. I sometimes report an interpretation from a specialist scholar that seems to me particularly relevant to the trends and issues under discussion. Other times I propose a new interpretation. The reader interested in pursuing further the topics raised here will find much food for thought in various studies that I cite.[30] I have taken special care to locate images that give a sense of how various lands and peoples were portrayed at the time and the sorts of costumes and staging that have been given to exotic operas and ballets in the past and nowadays.

Organizing principles

The book consists of four sections.

Part I (this chapter and Chapter 2) lays out some basic methodological considerations, notably two paradigms that clarify how music functioned in exoticist representations (as hinted in Box 1.1, trends 5–7).

Part II likewise consists of two chapters. Chapter 3 explores some of the roots of music-assisted representations of the exotic, as seen in prose descriptions and visual images from the eras of the Greeks, the Romans, and early Christianity and from the centuries in which Europe struggled with various Arab peoples and then with the Ottoman Empire. Chapter 4 explores analogous roots in descriptions and images that arose during the first centuries of overseas colonialism and empire (e.g., in the New World).

Part III, again two chapters, deals with representations (works and some "non-works") in which Otherness is conveyed through a single primary component: words, in popular songs (Chapter 5); and musical style, in instrumental dances associated with various foreign lands (Chapter 6).

The much lengthier Part IV (Chapters 7–13) explores, as systematically as space permits, what happened when concepts of exotic-ethnic Otherness

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were expressed in genres that combine music with other artistic components, such as an extended story, political propaganda, religious doctrines, and – in theatrical works – sung verse, costumes, sets, gesture, and dance. The most important of these mixed-means representations were theatrical dance-events (e.g., ballets and *intermedi*) from the early 1500s to the early 1700s (Chapters 7–8); sacred vocal works, including numerous instances of "dramatic oratorio" – as the genre is known today – by Handel (Chapter 9); and a wide range of operatic works, from the beginning – *c.* 1600 – to Handel, Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart (Chapters 10–13).

When thinking about the relationship between musical works and the exotic, one might tend to assume that works representing the same given locale should always be grouped together for discussion. Sometimes this proves practical. Western culture has often characterized the Middle East – broadly understood as extending from North Africa to Turkey, Arabia, Persia, and Central Asia – in an unambiguous manner (if also a highly stereotyped one). Thus, works "located" in that super-region can be helpfully juxtaposed and compared (as in Chapter 13).[31] But in other cases, a grouping by region can prove problematic. We cannot always discern whether the "Indians" – so labeled – in certain seventeenth-century ballets were understood as hailing from, say, the Indian subcontinent, the East Indies (e.g., Indonesia), the West Indies (the Caribbean), Mexico and Central America, the Amazon basin, or the North American woodlands.

As a result, two other organizing principles – genre and chronology – prove to be at least as important. Chapters 5–13 are primarily structured by musical genre (e.g., song, instrumental dance piece, ballet, oratorio, or opera), and chronology helps us trace developments *within* a multifarious genre such as opera (Chapters 10–13).[32] A side-effect of this primary and intertwined emphasis on genre and chronology is that allusions to political and social issues of the day may be addressed in more than one chapter, rather than addressed in a single topic-oriented chapter. Among the major issues that this or that work may be seen as raising are: kingship; national identity; religious authority and dogma; social class or "estate" (e.g., the duties and appropriate behaviors of military generals, landowners, and other members of the ruling class); the growing disparities between rural and urban life; shifting conceptions of ethnicity, race, and gender; no-less-shifting trends in regard to marriage and sexuality; competition between imperial seafaring nations; Christian missionary work overseas; the transatlantic slave trade; literary traditions involving magic, fantasy, the pastoral, and the supernatural; and the established practice of justifying current-day social structures by invoking purported parallels

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