

Cultural Brokers and the Making of Glocal Soundscapes, 1880s to 1930s

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In September 2014, the European Network in Universal and Global History hosted the Fourth European Congress on World and Global History at the *École normale supérieure* in Paris. Of the more than 150 panels dealing with all imaginable aspects of modern global connectivity, there was but one dedicated to the field of music, out of which this special issue grew. It is no exaggeration to state that global history has been a largely silent undertaking so far, interested neither in music nor sound more generally. Few historians care (or dare) to address music and the arts as an integral part of social analysis, let alone the political or economic dimensions of musical life. Those who have done so have very rarely explored the transcultural repercussions. A good many musicologists, for their part, have been more accustomed to look beyond the aesthetic qualities of their subject to its wider social and cultural context. Most scholarly efforts, however, centre exclusively on western classical music, and are more reluctant to investigate the global reach of other musical styles and their significance for the history of transcultural contact in general. Finally, ethnomusicologists, whose historical inquiries embrace everything but classical music, see the latest wave of globalisation and the rise of the world music discourse as an opportunity to gain new significance. As Bruno Nettl puts it in his interview for this issue, the field has become “more a part of the modern world, of modern living.” Indeed, the recent call for an “historical ethnomusicology” as a new subfield within the discipline is indicative of its dominant orientation towards the present in the last twenty-five years or so.¹

Against this backdrop of considerable neglect in the humanities, the present special issue aims to bring the field of transcultural and global musical relations to the fore. On the basis of rich empirical material, the six authors featured here not only hope to draw readers’ interest to the global history of music and inspire further research. They also argue, each in their own way, that a musical lens provides fresh insights into the history of global cultural exchange. Highlighting cultural brokers, soundscapes, and the rise of global musical entanglements from the 1880s to the 1930s, this special issue

addresses three epistemological categories that inform our take on these fields of research: agency, space, and time.

We claim that soundscapes are “made” by “cultural brokers.” In doing so, we privilege the agency inherent in processes of cultural exchange vis-à-vis aesthetic and intrinsically musical phenomena, on the one hand, and the institutional and social structures that shape musical life, on the other. While the emphasis on the actors’ role as intermediaries is in no way meant to discount the impact of other factors that govern practices and perceptions of music, we did find that musical experts of all sorts enjoy a large scope of action that allows them to trigger changes in musical activities and alter the structural conditions of performance and listening. In the nineteenth century, the main route to cross-cultural musical exchange was face-to-face contact and the live experience of musical performance, even if we take into account the dissemination of sheet music that reached those already well-versed in a new musical idiom. Around the turn of the century, the global rise of sound reproduction technologies, too, still hinged on recording engineers acting as cultural brokers when they charted new territory. It was only after corporate distribution networks had been established that recorded sound began to revolutionise patterns of music reception over the course of the twentieth century. Before that, musicians, missionaries, educators, and sound engineers usually had to negotiate between musical tastes, whether they were out to perform, teach, or sell music.

On a conceptual note, “cultural broker” is one of several terms used to delineate social actors who mediate between two cultures in the sense of geographically separate entities.² One finds the “broker” described alternately as the go-between and the in-between, the intermediary and the *passeur culturel*. All these words are part of a broader reasoning on cross-cultural exchange that has provided the humanities with so many concepts and terms that one can easily lose one’s bearings in the labyrinth of cultural encounter and translation, entanglement and translocality, hybridisation and mimicry—to name but a few of the most influential terminologies. Still, what they have in common is arguably more important. First of all, these concepts help liberate us from writing history from a purely national perspective. Second, they share an aversion to essentialist understandings of historical categories, which are especially prevalent in everything called culture. Third, and consequently, all theories on cross-cultural exchange imply that when people, ideas, or objects travel, none of them remains unaffected at the end of the journey. Finally, transcultural methodology claims that whatever the brokerage at stake, it is the brokers’ agency in the sense of meaningful activity that fundamentally shapes the terms of interaction and therefore must be thoroughly explored.³

When we do so, however, it is important to embed the brokers’ agency within the particular historical setting and its social and political environment. For this purpose, it is worth recalling the profound and pioneering work of the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits. In 1938, Herskovits, a pupil of Franz Boas, published his book *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact*, which partly reads like a research agenda for what had been going on in the field of transcultural history in recent decades.

Drawing on a huge corpus of field studies from his colleagues all over the world, Herskovits explicitly intended to provide a theory that might be of general interest for the social and cultural sciences, including history and sociology. It is not only his basic assumption that cultures are historically contingent and highly permeable when in contact with each other that makes it a seminal work. The “outline for the study of acculturation,” which he delivered as an appendix to his book, illuminates the situation of cultural contact and the position of the broker in detail.⁴

Herskovits reminds us to differentiate analytically between “selecting” (or appropriating) brokers and “donating” (or disseminating) ones, which sensitises us to the fact that brokers did not usually act as an objective third party or stand symmetrically in-between.⁵ He proposes to consider carefully the social positions of brokers in both their old and new societies, which impinged on their scope of action. He highlights the degree of material and non-material affinity between the cultures in question just as he considers the dissimilarity between them as a factor affecting the brokerage. Finally, he advises us to take account for the fundamental power relations that underlie the process of cultural brokerage. The articles of this special issue carefully consider all these possible constraints in order to adequately grasp brokers’ performance and impact. Herskovits’s deliberations thus help us guard against an exaggerated and lopsided emphasis on agency, which has been the tendency in various kinds of transcultural historiography in recent years.⁶

In his book, Herskovits also argued that musical relations were a particularly fertile field of study. Following him in this respect as well, the articles of this special issue present a wide range of cultural brokers in the world of music. They cover brokers coming from “outside,” such as missionaries, recording engineers, steel guitarists, and military musicians, as well as those from within, such as local music teachers, entrepreneurs, and musicians. Likewise, a wide range of motives can be discerned, revealing that musical travelling was not always a deliberate, active process but often one that occurred as a by-product of culture contact in other areas of social action. Proselytising and military reform were among the global processes that set a good deal of western music in motion, often in imperial and colonial contexts. At the same time, musicians and music teachers initiated international as well as intra-national mediations through which people became familiar with new music, usually in a less power-laden way. Hence, musical brokerage was a complex process, shaped as much by local circumstances, both social and musical, as by regional and global power constellations.

The global transfer of music furthermore involves space-making practices. The soundscapes resulting from such transmissions are conceived here as the complex and historically contingent spatial mapping of musical styles and genres. Especially in global history, the metaphorical use of the suffix “-scape” immediately calls to mind the various cultural flows and deterritorialisations that Arjun Appadurai famously pointed out in 1990. However, music and sound are strangely missing from Appadurai’s theory and cannot simply be assimilated to his categories of mediascapes, technoscapes, or ideoscapes. The term “soundscape” was coined earlier, in 1969, by eco-musicologist R. Murray Schafer. His idea was to direct attention to the sound

environments humans experience in their everyday life and to incite research into how to improve these environments. Following this understanding, even without Schafer's normative impetus, "soundscape" has become a central concept in the recently established interdisciplinary field of sound studies which, however, clearly privileges the dimension of locally confined perception and listening over musical production and cross-cultural transfer.⁷

The glocal soundscapes under scrutiny in this issue fall between Appadurai's interest in the production of global structures and the sound studies' preoccupation with local perceptions, precisely because the dissemination of music occurred both on a global scale and, in terms of musical appropriation and practice, on a local level that can only be investigated case by case. Consequently, the following articles do not deal with the geographical diffusion and mapping of distinct genres so much as they explore specific soundscapes on the spot that developed from encounters of global and local forces.⁸

Reading the contributions in this issue alongside each other brings four analytic dimensions of glocal soundscapes to the fore. First, the driving forces behind the increase in transnational musical relations and the emergence of newly localised musical practices can be identified. The factors may be distinguished according to whether their main impetus is artistic, commercial, educational, and nationalist modernising, or some combination of these. While John Troutman's Hawaiian guitarists, for example, were primarily motivated by artistic and commercial aspirations, it is striking to see how many of the actors under scrutiny in the other articles were driven by extra-musical considerations such as proselytising, military reform, or simple financial gain, as in the gramophone industry in China and India examined by Christina Lubinski and Andreas Steen. Of particular importance (especially since the late nineteenth century) has been not only the emergence of global entertainment markets, for both live and recorded music, which allowed local voices to gain resonance beyond their places of origin, but also the nationalist reforms that inspired a westernised music policy. We find the latter in militaries from Chile to the Ottoman Empire and, as Margaret Mehl argues, more broadly in singing and instrumental instruction in Meiji Japan, where state-run music education established deep roots among the provincial populace.

Second, the musical practices in which these push and pull factors manifest themselves include music performance and its aesthetic discourse as well as the institutionalisation of musical life in general. The fact that music before the advent of recorded sound had to be performed live is of course a truism. The contributions, however, call our attention to the special importance of musical performance in the context of cultural interactions. They do so by pointing to the improvisational, spectacular quality of live performances that very often involved itinerant musicians and novel instruments and had the potential to disrupt and broaden conventions of taste. The unpredictable craze for the Hawaiian steel guitar, for example, and the growing popularity of brass bands associated with the military cannot be understood without considering the impact of itinerant performers. A much more indirect channel of influence on musical life is highlighted in the analysis of a Japanese music journal of the 1890s, which served as a networking platform and provided aesthetic orientation to all kinds of music lovers.

Apart from performance and publication, the present articles emphasise the dimension of institution-building more than any other aspect of musical practice. Whether we consider the formation of bands and choirs, or the profound changes in music education under the tutelage of churches, the military, and the state, or the establishment of concerts and recordings as novel cultural events and social practices, we find that music institutions around the world were originating in or being transformed by the process of transcultural relations. By the 1920s, people in the Pacific Rim and beyond learnt to play the steel guitar, Japanese students took up piano lessons and began attending Western-style concerts, Indian and Chinese singers regularly recorded for foreign gramophone companies, and missionary graduates all over Sub-Saharan Africa sang western hymns and began to develop a syncretic African church music. All these practices hinged on institutions of learning, making, and listening to music that had only come into existence in their particular localities in the preceding few decades.

Third, the emerging soundscapes shaped by these musical practices and institutions can be differentiated according to the dominant mode of interaction and the power relations governing the brokers' field. A typological distinction between conflict, competition, and cooperation allows us to map the possible modes of interaction. Most of the cases under investigation feature a combination of these. But the most interesting finding here is that, whereas conflict ensued on a number of occasions (for example, over the legitimacy of missionary music), and competition was frequent among intermediaries (such as when military bands vied for national prestige or record companies competed for customers), more often than not it was cooperation that characterised the way in which cultural encounters took place. The necessity of entering into some kind of dialogue on the terms of musical appropriation is evident in all of the cases before us, whether they involved strong symbolic hierarchies or communication on an equal footing.

While this argument might sound naively optimistic about the conditions of musical exchange, it corroborates views held by Paul Gilroy and Edward Said, both of whom dealt with the role of music in transcultural settings. To be sure, neither denies that music can become enmeshed in and reinforce the project of colonial domination, as in the case of Verdi's *Aida*, which Said discusses in *Culture and Imperialism*.⁹ However, in many of his writings Said conceives of music as an aesthetic practice that potentially offers unique opportunities for cross-cultural understanding.¹⁰ This is because of the way in which music can be perceived, namely in a non-hegemonic, non-linguistic and non-linear fashion. The multiplicity of voices is not only the defining moment in polyphonic music, but also serves as a reminder that there are alternatives to fixed identities and one-way narratives. According to Said, such alternatives lie precisely in an awareness of diversity within music. Paul Gilroy, too, regards music as an important field of practice that lends itself to negotiation and cooperation. This becomes evident from the role music played in the Black Atlantic where it figured as a venue of "diasporic cultural innovation."¹¹ When slave songs were performed in the context of late nineteenth-century mass culture, for example, the dislocation of music was followed by its re-articulation in a different

cultural setting. Black music, Gilroy argues, is therefore always both western and Black and contributes to identity constructions “in-between.” The various dislocations and global disseminations of music examined in this issue further underscore how cultural transfer, even if shaped by underlying asymmetrical power-relations, triggered cooperative forms of local creative expressions that often also challenged the hegemonic discourse of nineteenth-century western art music.

Fourth, soundscapes may be distinguished by the consequences that musical interaction entailed. Following Herskovits’s typology, we can discern patterns of adoption, adaptation, and resistance. Though few instances of outright opposition to musical influences have been observed, one exceptional case is that of the Chinese and Indian consumers who, under certain conditions, refused to buy the recordings of Western gramophone companies, either because they did not appeal to their tastes or because nationalist politics called for a boycott. On the other hand, the wholesale adoption of a new musical genre was not the general rule; but it did occur in some cases, such as when military modernisation in Chile seemed to dictate the absorption of the Prussian repertoire of marches, or when Protestant church music began to be cultivated by the self-Westernising elite of Lagos Colony. More frequently, however, adaptations and transformations of musical styles ensued. To pay due attention to such consequences, all authors chose to examine cultural transfer from a long-term historical point of view that extends beyond the point of first intercultural contact. Their contributions show that it may be useful to further differentiate among adaptations: While some result in a pluralisation that enables the coexistence of multiple musical idioms and in which claims for authenticity are often greatly reinforced, other adaptations take the form of hybridisation. In these cases, different musical styles merge—instruments are indigenised, melodies harmonised, and lyrics translated, to name just a few possibilities from the myriad of potential transformations.

Finally, exploring global musical relations allows us to draw a more complete picture of the transitional period between roughly 1880 and 1930. Today, the decades preceding the First World War are most commonly depicted as the “age of empire” and as the high tide of globalisation, an era deemed to have ended in 1914 according to the political and economic preoccupations of many authors. Cultural historians and, more specifically, scholars focusing on the history of Western musical life, have all the while emphasised other developments that characterise the “long” turn of the century. First and foremost among those is the heightened intensity of stylistic innovation that resulted from the rise of jazz, on the one hand, and, on the other, the rise of modernism in Western high art which began with Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, and the French Impressionists, and led to the collapse of tonality in the early twentieth century.¹² Second, the period in question has been distinguished from earlier nineteenth-century music culture by the twin developments of the “sacralisation” of high art, as concert programmes and conventions of listening became more elitist in the opera and the concert hall, and the “popular music revolution,” evidenced by the emergence of popular genres, the music hall as well as the sale of sheet music and records.¹³ Third, the technical reproduction of sound made possible by the development of marketable phonographs, gramophones, and player pianos

since the late 1880s and that of radio broadcasting during the 1920s, for the first time allowed for the separation of music from musicians and thus greatly facilitated the spatial and social mobilisation of sound. This is one of the main reasons why cultural historians have spoken of a “mass media saddle period” beginning in the 1880s.¹⁴

While these dimensions of interpretation and periodisation draw attention to crucial aspects of Western modernity, they fail to take into account the broader picture that the history of glocal soundscapes brings to the fore. The period between 1880 and 1930 was also the age of musical brokers, and their stories help us to reconfigure its social and cultural history in multiple, less Eurocentric ways.

To begin with, music was indeed part and parcel of the age of empire, but in ways that illuminate both the imperialist project of establishing symbolic hierarchies and the concurrent expression of anticolonial sentiments. To look at the transfer of military bands, missionaries, and all kinds of musical experts in other parts of the world is to shed as much light on the civilising mission as on its backlash and unintended consequences. The soundscapes, in which negotiations between Western pretensions and non-Western re-interpretations of musical idioms played out, particularly during the early 1900s, show that the age of empire lasted well beyond 1914, just as the challenge to presumed cultural superiority long preceded the age of decolonisation. The cultural dialectics set in motion through the movement of music and musicians is thus an important and largely overlooked ingredient of the long, transitional turn of the century that bridged the apex of imperialism and its demise.

In a similar vein, the entangled histories of music in this issue were certainly propelled by processes of globalisation. Yet this does not mean that the global musical relations neatly coincided with economic or political ones. In contrast to reverse developments in the interwar years, which accelerated after the Great Depression and resulted in economic protectionism and political disintegration, many musical exchanges were meant to stay because institutions of music making had changed and the material culture of music been transformed. This holds especially true for the gramophone, which provided for a continuous increase of (commercialised) musical exchange all over the world. While the global presence of musical brokers increased significantly after the 1870s, due to imperial expansion and major advances in transport and communication technologies, the quick establishment of the so-called second market on a global level considerably altered and multiplied the modes of musical exchange to the extent that profound musical shifts could unfold mainly on the basis of just listening to recorded music on gramophones.¹⁵ While the global mobility of cultural brokers continued throughout the 1930s and even intensified during the Second World War, their dominant position was increasingly challenged by the rise of such new mechanisms.

What is more, as global historians have repeatedly stressed, the globalisation paradigm should not obscure the fact that, global flows of people and things notwithstanding, ideas and practices of nations, regions, and localities persisted or were even reinforced. Music is another case in point for this argument. Behind the bewildering networks of cultural brokers, we sometimes perceive, from Japan to the Ottoman Empire, self-consciously modernising nation states and their supporters whose nationalism

encouraged the transfer of music rather than impeded it. Correspondingly, cosmopolitan attitudes in music did not just supersede more parochial stances favouring local, regional, or national musical idioms. Rather two versions of cosmopolitanism competed with each other around 1900. “Rooted cosmopolitans,”¹⁶ who cherished their particularist musical traditions and simultaneously made a claim for their universal importance, existed in tension with “estranged cosmopolitans”¹⁷ who, taking a more distanced stance towards their own culture, sought ways of understanding other musical languages and of translating them. The brokers under scrutiny in the following articles exemplify this broad spectrum: On the one hand, there were those intermediaries, whether virtuosos or pedagogues, who acted as music missionaries seeking to spread European music around the world, assuming that it contained aesthetic and moral values of universal significance. On the other hand, some of those who became well-versed in different musical idioms challenged the civilising mission and looked for a more reciprocal relation between different cultures, yet at the same time ran the risk of essentialising the differences. Studying the making of glocal soundscapes thus helps us identify and understand such subtle distinctions beyond the global-local antagonism.

Looking at the music itself in a period when modernist art music and popular genres were on the rise, the soundscapes under investigation even begin to tap into the trans-cultural sources of stylistic innovation and musical practice. Musicological research has so far analysed the most notable examples such as the hybrid origins of ragtime, jazz, and tango, and the inspirations that Debussy, Satie, Ravel, and other familiar composers received from their engagement with music from different world regions. But what do we know, for example, of the impact of the Hawaiian steel guitar on dance music around the globe, or of the sprawling brass bands affecting the sound of public celebrations and popular music making in so many countries? The creative adaptations resulting from the introduction of Westernised music education, whether in colonial Africa or East Asia, constitute another case in point that deserves more attention. It is as yet unclear (and beyond the scope of this issue to ascertain) the extent to which such musical encounters also left their mark on modern composers of art music. However, if we look at some figures less often associated with the canon of modernism—the Creole Englishman Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the Japanese Yamada Kosaku, or the Cuban Amadeo Roldán—we observe that the condition they found themselves in was downright paradoxical. The European Classical-Romantic tradition continued to serve as a source of inspiration, but at the same time Western tonality seemed either exhausted or was perceived as the Procrustean bed for other musical languages. Cross-cultural experimentation was a viable way of dealing with this dilemma.

Ultimately, the period between the 1880s and the 1930s points to the persistent relevance of live performance and the primacy of place in the making of and listening to music. As Lubinski and Steen show in their article, even the gramophone companies’ incursions into India and China were strongly shaped by local factors. All articles argue in one way or another that the localisation of music in modernity became increasingly glocal: It involved musicians, scores, and instruments that were mobilised across borders, and sometimes performances and the evolution of musical

taste had repercussions in very far-flung places. To give but one example, when the Bayreuth Festival was inaugurated in 1876, the event, attended among others by King Dom Pedro II of Brazil and several international composers, was not an exclusively German affair. Twenty years later, the reverberations could be felt when, in 1896, the Teatro Amazonas opened its doors in Manaus in an effort to establish ties that would connect the Brazilian frontier to metropolitan high culture.

The grand opera in the rainforest continued to fuel the imagination of later generations in the West, most famously in Werner Herzog's 1982 epic film *Fitzcarraldo*, in which a fervid opera aficionado fails to reproduce Manaus' success story in the Peruvian jungle. The relevance of place hence transcends the period under consideration and extends into our own time, not only in fiction, but also in musical life proper: When the German avant-garde artist Christoph Schlingensiefel came to Manaus twenty-five years after *Fitzcarraldo* to stage Wagner's *Fliegender Holländer*, he made Brazilian drummers, samba dancers, and further elements of Brazilian carnival part of the performance. If nothing else, this event also indicates the particular ease with which the musical civilising mission can be turned on its head—today as in the past.

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Notes

1 Seminal steps on the way towards a global history of music are Osterhammel, "Globale Horizonte" and

van der Linden, "Music and Empire". See also the work of a forerunner from ethnomusicology, Nettl, *Western Impact*,

- and, more recently, Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism*. Musicology has just (re-)discovered the global dimension of its discipline. See the activities of the Balzan Research Project: “Towards a Global History of Music,” directed by Reinhard Strohm: <http://www.music.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/balzan-research-project/>. On the development in ethnomusicology see Stokes, “Globalization” and McCollum and Hebert, *Theory and Method*.
- 2 This should not be confused with an understanding more common in the field of creative industries research where cultural intermediaries are conceived as brokers between the spheres of production and consumption. See Negus, “Cultural Intermediaries.”
 - 3 For a recent overview, see Rodgers, “Cultures in Motion.” On go-betweens, see Schaffer, et al., “Introduction.” On cultural brokers, see Szasz, “Introduction.”
 - 4 Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 117–136. A concise overview on this subject that also draws on Herskovits is Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*.
 - 5 In contrast, Schaffer, Roberts, Raj, and Delbourgo, “Introduction,” frame their go-betweens as a largely independent third element, see xiv–xvi.
 - 6 Herskovits, *Acculturation*, 134–36. On the lopsided use of agency in recent years see Thomas, “Historicising Agency.”
 - 7 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*; Schafer, *Soundscape*; and Morat, “Introduction.”
 - 8 See Robertson, “Glocalization.” On the former approach, see, for example, Leyshon, Matless, and Revill, “Introduction.”
 - 9 Said shows that the opera composed for the inauguration of the Suez Canal did much to exoticize and mythologize the image of Egypt along the lines of French Egyptology. See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 133–59.
 - 10 See only Said, *Musical Elaborations*. A distillation of Said’s take on music is provided in de Groot, “Music at the Limits.”
 - 11 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 94.
 - 12 See Taruskin, *Music*, and, as a more accessible account, Ross, *Rest*.
 - 13 See Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, and Scott, *Sounds*.
 - 14 Knoch and Morat, “Medienwandel,” 9–34 (translated by the editors of this issue). See also Katz, *Capturing Sound*.
 - 15 One example is the development of the Congolese Rumba in the 1940s and 1950s, based primarily on listening to records from Cuban bands. See White, “Congolese Rumba.”
 - 16 The concept was coined by the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah and has been used to interpret the influence of German musicians in the United States by Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy*, 66–108.
 - 17 The term “estrangement” was introduced into cosmopolitan thinking by Gilroy, *Empire*.