

# Narratives of Musical Resilience and the Perpetuation of Whiteness in the Music History Classroom

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The music history classroom has a whiteness problem. Situated in departments and schools of music that have been designed to preserve, promote, and replicate the musical traditions of western Europe, the music history classroom is often deeply implicated in a project that centers whiteness and that celebrates proximity to whiteness as an admirable goal for persons of color.<sup>1</sup> Even in classrooms in which students of color outnumber white students, our textbooks overwhelmingly feature the creative work of European and European American men. After at least three decades of advocacy for more inclusive textbooks and teaching materials, textbook authors occasionally attempt to remedy these biases by including a person of color (POC), an LGBTQ+ figure, or a woman as a token.<sup>2</sup> Musicologists Kira Thurman and Kristen Turner, in their essay on diversifying the music history classroom, have pointed to some of the structural issues within music departments and schools of music that allow these biases to continue. Change is further complicated, they also note, by continued gaps in the musicological literature about women and POC. Offering tips for the creation of more inclusive playlists and reading lists, they suggest that such interventions as adding performers of color to class playlists can help students “learn that art music is not as much the repertoire of privilege as they thought it was” and can reveal “that the humanistic

1. Loren Kajikawa, “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music,” in *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*, eds. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Charles Harris, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and George Lipsitz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 155–74.

2. For a broad overview of the impacts of textbooks in the content and delivery of the music history survey, consult S. Andrew Granade, “Undergraduate Development of Coursework in Musicology,” *Oxford Handbooks Online* (October 2014), doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.013.12.

issues they feel passionately about are applicable to music courses.”<sup>3</sup> That such a simple act as diversifying the artists on a course playlist could have meaningful impacts reveals just how important it is to expand representations of POC and indigenous people in the music history classroom.

Yet, even when we attempt to engage meaningfully with the musical lives of people of color and indigenous people, the narratives that emerge in our music history classrooms often continue to privilege white perspectives. For instance, conventional narratives of African American music-making have, for much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, drawn particular attention to the resilience of musical traditions in the face of ongoing efforts to silence black voices. In a particularly strong passage that highlights the role that white racism played in shaping Black musical expression, for example, the tenth edition of W. W. Norton’s *A History of Western Music* offers the following discussion of the spiritual:

The one immigrant group that came to the United States against their will was Africans. Enslaved and brought over in inhuman[e] conditions, they came from many ethnic groups with different languages and customs. Mixed together on plantations or as domestic servants, they would have had a difficult time maintaining their original languages and cultures even if slaveholders had not actively worked to prevent this. But elements of their music were easier to preserve, because they had been widely shared among African societies and because white slaveholders did not consider singing a threat. Indeed, work songs were actively encouraged as a way to keep up the pace and the spirits, and many slaveholders required the enslaved people in their household or plantation to sing and dance for their entertainment....

The African American form of music with the greatest impact in the nineteenth century was the spiritual, a religious song of southern slaves, passed down through oral tradition. The texts were usually based on images or stories from the Bible, but they often carried hidden meanings of enslaved people’s yearning for freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Here, the spiritual stands primarily as a tool of resistance, with little attention given to its aesthetic or religious power.<sup>5</sup> As ethnomusicologist David Garcia has shown, though, the ways we “listen for Africa” in our construction of

3. Kira Thurman and Kristen Turner, “Six Easy Ways to Immediately Address Racial and Gender Diversity in Your Music History Classroom,” *Musicology Now* (17 July 2017), <http://www.musicologynow.org/2017/07/six-easy-ways-to-immediately-address.html>.

4. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 751–52 (emphasis in original).

5. For an overview of the scholarship on the many types of spiritual singing, consult Bob Darden, *People Get Ready! A New History of Black Gospel Music* (New York: Continuum Books, 2004), 70–93.

such narratives often tells us more about our own predilections, ideologies, and objectives.<sup>6</sup> Narratives of musical resilience have proven to be vital in the celebration of African American musical achievement, in building solidarity around civil rights initiatives, and in articulating the key musical, social, and cultural differences between African American music-making and that of the European American majority. As ethnomusicologist Alison Martin recently argued, “To be resilient is to affirm black humanity, and to affirm black humanity is a radical act of self-care that is well within the realm of both resilience and resistance.”<sup>7</sup>

But even as these narratives are useful in such a manner, they often obscure white supremacy’s central role in creating a need for Black musical resilience and can exacerbate the imbalances of power that have perpetuated white supremacy for generations.<sup>8</sup> Many narratives of musical life in the US appear to presume that racial prejudice was natural and inevitable, embodying philosopher Robin James’s observation that “resilience discourse ‘naturalizes’ damage.”<sup>9</sup> To be sure, any colonial system that relies on the forced labor of enslaved people would necessarily require oppressive behaviors and practices to maintain that system. But we must remember that, in the colonial U.S. and in other places connected to the transatlantic slave trade, these oppressive practices were part of a systemic effort that was led by individuals and groups who made active and deliberate choices to institute racist structures. As Christina Sharpe has argued in her powerful book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, African Americans—even into the twenty-first century—must live with the traumas of transatlantic slavery and try to find space to live when “The disaster of Black subjection was and is planned.”<sup>10</sup>

Although music histories often nod toward the oppression, exploitation, and death of musical African Americans, they seldom point to the individual choices that whites have made to create and sustain oppressive structures of white supremacy. In fact, as Joseph Byrd noted in his 2009 survey of blackface minstrelsy’s place in major music history and music appreciation textbooks,

6. David F. García, *Listening for Africa: Freedom, Modernity, and the Logic of Black Music’s Origins* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

7. Alison Martin, “Black Music Matters: Affirmation and Resilience in African American Musical Spaces in Washington DC,” in *Black Lives Matter and Music: Protest, Intervention, Reflection*, eds. Fernando Orejuela and Stephanie Shonekan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 81.

8. Gavin James Campbell, *Music and the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 66–80, esp. 78–79.

9. Robin James, *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2015), 83.

10. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

although textbooks sometimes treat that fraught subject, “none dares make it a major theme, which it surely was.”<sup>11</sup> This essay, then, offers a model unit on music of the late eighteenth century that works to balance narratives of white supremacist oppression and Black cultural resilience in an effort to engage more deliberately in the decolonization of the undergraduate music history survey. This unit also explicitly and implicitly extends this discussion to indigenous people and works to connect Africa, Europe, and the Americas in a way that does not deliberately privilege European perspectives. We begin with a close look at the 1740 Negro Code of South Carolina and its subsequent ban on the drumming of enslaved Africans, which might be seen as the first overt and documented example of white supremacy at work in music of the colonial United States.<sup>12</sup> Deeper engagement with the facts of this case study allows us to link South Carolina to the Caribbean and Europe, as well as to West Africa, and opens a number of questions about the circulation of power during the age of the transatlantic slave trade. We then turn to a unit plan with potential assignments to help undergraduate students engage more deeply with important questions about race, power, and representation in music. We believe that this case offers a useful opportunity to introduce students to concepts of power and to begin important antiracist work in schools of music and music departments in the United States and elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Stono Rebellion, the South Carolina Negro Code of 1740, and the Drumming of Enslaved Africans**

The South Carolina Negro Code of 1740 was a comprehensive legislative effort to codify the practice of slavery in the colony. Curious among the many restrictions in the law is a passage that prohibited enslaved Africans from owning and playing drums. Developed by white property-owning legislators in response to the 1739 Stono Rebellion, the act was intended to prevent future slave revolts and to bolster white dominance within the colony. In the wake of

11. Joseph Byrd, “Whitewashing Blackface Minstrelsy in American College Textbooks,” *Popular Music and Society* 32, no. 1 (February 2009), 84.

12. Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 144.

13. Here, we are buoyed by Melanie Lowe’s call “for teachers of music history . . . to put this history in direct dialogue with our contemporary, everyday lives—to make music history not just musically relevant, but intellectually relevant, politically relevant, sexually relevant, spiritually relevant, psychologically relevant, even ecologically relevant not just in the ‘there and then’ of history but in the ‘here and now’ of today.” Melanie Lowe, “Teaching Music History Now: Making Tangible Connections to the Here and Now,” this *Journal* 1, no. 1 (2010), 46.

what historian Darold D. Wax described as the “most serious slave uprising in colonial America,” South Carolina legislators enacted draconian restrictions that touched all aspects of slave life, ostensibly preventing enslaved people from gaining the knowledge and collective power to overthrow a system that was highly dependent on their subjugation.<sup>14</sup> That the Stono Rebellion included music and dance, though, undoubtedly led to punitive restrictions on the expressive culture of enslaved Africans in the South Carolina colony.

The Stono Rebellion occurred on Sunday, September 9, 1739, when a group of enslaved Africans attempted to march from the Stono River near Charles Town (modern-day Charleston) to St. Augustine, a city in Spanish Florida where the governor had promised to grant freedom to escaped slaves.<sup>15</sup> That morning, approximately twenty enslaved Africans—led by a slave named Jemmy—hid near the Stono River outside of Charles Town until it was time to publicly take action.<sup>16</sup> The rebels overtook a firearms warehouse where they killed two guards before raiding it, taking drums and white banners—a possible sign of their invocation of the Virgin Mary’s support for their efforts—before proceeding on their route to the accompaniment of drums.<sup>17</sup> Early in their march, the rebel forces looked to be strong, and their ranks expanded as they acquired drums which called other enslaved people to the rebellion.<sup>18</sup> As they marched, they killed nearly every white colonist they passed, but they spared the life of an innkeeper. Totalling nearly ninety and gaining confidence, the rebels stopped in an open field to dance, sing, and play their drums, an act that attracted the attention of Lieutenant-Governor William Bull, who gathered members of the South Carolina militia to launch a counterattack that killed many rebels and scattered the others. A group of the escaped rebels continued in their attempt to get to St. Augustine, but the militia searched for them for months, killing approximately forty people within the first two weeks.<sup>19</sup>

14. Darold D. Wax, “‘The Great Risque We Run’: The Aftermath of Slave Rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, 1739–1745,” *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (1982), 136.

15. For an overview of the Stono Rebellion, consult, in addition to Wax; John K. Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1101–1113; Mark M. Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion,” *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 3 (2001): 513–34.

16. Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt,” 519; Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” 1102; John E. Fleming, “Stono River Rebellion and Its Impact on the South Carolina Slave Code,” *Negro History Bulletin* 42 (July 1979), 67.

17. Fleming, “Stono River Rebellion,” 67; Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt,” 529–530; Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” 1102.

18. Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt,” 519; Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” 1102.

19. Fleming, “Stono River Rebellion,” 67; Smith, “Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt,” 529; Thornton, “African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,” 1102, 1108; Wax, “‘The Great Risque We Run,’” 136.

In the year following the Stono Rebellion, legislators in South Carolina—themselves property-owning white colonists—undertook the creation, passage, and implementation of a sprawling piece of legislation intended to define every aspect of slavery in the colony. This “Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves in This Province,” also known as the 1740 Negro Code, was far-reaching in its efforts to restrict the movement and actions of enslaved Africans, setting out punishments for any variety of behaviors deemed offensive and punishing slaveholders as well as enslaved people for their infractions. Of particular interest for music historians is a clause prohibiting enslaved people from the “using or keeping of drums, horns, or other loud instruments.” This article also states that any slaveholder who allows their slave to “beat drums” must pay a fine of ten pounds for every offense. Of particular interest here is that “drums, horns, or other loud instruments” are lumped into the same category as “wooden swords, and other mischievous and dangerous weapons,” the possession of which would allow “all masters, overseers and other persons whosoever . . . to disarm [the slave], take up [the weapon] and whip” them. As such, one might easily infer that possession of “drums, horns, or other loud instruments” could yield similar punishments.<sup>20</sup>

South Carolina’s drum ban was far from the first in the colonial Americas. Rather, as was the case with much legislation regarding slavery, it was taken from model legislation enacted in other colonies, particularly those in the Caribbean. The first comprehensive English slave code was enacted in Barbados in 1661, with a drum ban following in its 1688 code.<sup>21</sup> The Barbados act explicitly restricted enslaved individuals from “using or keeping Drums, Horns, or any other loud Instruments,” language that is exactly paralleled by the South Carolina act’s restriction.<sup>22</sup> This act was then passed in Georgia in 1770, and as a result enslaved Africans who knew nothing of the Stono Rebellion had their rights restricted in a response to it.<sup>23</sup> As such, the practice of white supremacy was systematically codified through the use of model legislation and language that expressly sought to eradicate the musical expression of enslaved Africans for the purpose of protecting the institution of slavery. It is possible to hear

20. “An Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves,” in David J. McCord, ed., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 1840), 7: 410.

21. Edward B. Rugemer, “The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2013): 429–58; Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 79; “An Act for the Good Governing of Servants, and Ordering the Rights between Masters and Servants,” in *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes, From 1648, to 1718* (London: John Baskett, 1721), 119.

22. “An Act for the Good Governing of Servants,” 119.

23. “Slaves and Free Persons of Color,” in W. A. Hotchkiss, ed., *A Codification of the Statute Law of Georgia Including the English Statutes of Force* (Savannah: J. M. Cooper, 1845), 4: 813.

the drumming ban enacted in the 1740 South Carolina Negro Code not only as a reaction to a real threat—the use of drums to communicate information about rebellion—but a deliberate effort to consolidate the power of white male supremacy over enslaved Africans throughout the South.

Although South Carolina's prohibitions against the drumming of enslaved Africans were implemented in response to the Stono Rebellion, their impacts proved far more impactful.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the 1740 South Carolina Negro Code's passage, music provided enslaved Africans valuable opportunities for individual and communal expression and for the establishment of collective solidarity in the wake of the unspeakable traumas associated with enslavement. Although they sang while working on the plantations, enslaved Africans were able to devote more of their time to music making on Sundays, when they could play drums and dance together.<sup>25</sup> It was here that musical practices carried from Africa were likely recreated and modified to accommodate their new settings, creating an important lifeline to the familiar and the safe in an environment that was anything but.

The drumming ban enacted in the 1740 South Carolina Negro Code can be read not simply as an attempt to quell rebellion, but as an effort to deliberately erase opportunities for enslaved Africans to maintain their culture, a form of cultural genocide. Moreover, it simultaneously supplanted the sounds of African drumming with those of colonial drumming. As musicologist Bonnie Gordon has recently argued in relation to another colonial figure, “music and noise in [Thomas] Jefferson's world was bound up with that nation-building project, which incorporated racial difference as a complex but integral component.”<sup>26</sup> Such was also the case in South Carolina, where European colonists asserted their own sonic dominance through the use of military drums.<sup>27</sup> Historian Larry E. Ivers, for instance, has noted the importance of music to colonial South Carolinians and indicates that the “musical instruments [they used] included

24. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, “‘Attended with Great Inconveniences’: Slave Literacy and the 1740 South Carolina Negro Act,” *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 125, no. 1 (2010), 201.

25. John Michael Vlach, “Afro-American Domestic Artifacts in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” *Material Culture* 19, no. 1 (1987), 12–18; Tanya Y. Price, “Rhythms of Culture: Djembe and African Memory in African-American Cultural Traditions,” *Black Music Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (2013), 227–247; Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, 69–72; Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35–37, 50.

26. Bonnie Gordon, “What Mr. Jefferson Didn't Hear,” in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, eds. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 109.

27. Gordon, 127. Gordon notes the juxtaposition of military drumming and the drumming of enslaved Africans in Haiti during the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804.

violins, flutes, fifes, and drums.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Ivers notes that South Carolina militia companies were typically outfitted with “a drummer, fifty white privates, and fifty black and Indian slave privates.”<sup>29</sup> To put it more clearly, colonized peoples were conscripted to military service governed largely by the sounds of European colonial drums.<sup>30</sup> As part of their colonial military duties, drummers were also stationed in colonial forts, as was the case with Fort King George, located in present-day Darien, Georgia, where a drummer was stationed beginning in September 1721.<sup>31</sup> European colonists appear, as well, to have used drums as instruments of diplomacy in the South Carolina colony. In March 1726, for instance, tensions between the Creeks and the government of South Carolina came to a head when a group of Cherokees and Chickasaws attacked Cusseta, a Creek town in present-day Alabama, while carrying a British drum and flag that had been a gift from acting South Carolina governor Arthur Middleton in 1723.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, even after slave drumming prohibitions were in effect, enslaved people were permitted to play the drum in service to the military, as was noted in a French account of a 1742 English effort to enlist men into the militia.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, the law permitted the sonic dominance of colonial militarism over the musical expression of enslaved individuals.

Gordon also notes the prevalence of other sonic tools to govern the lives of enslaved Africans, most notably Jefferson’s decision to use bells—commonly rung by slaves—to structure activities at Monticello, describing the bells as “sonic instruments of domination that compelled slaves into action.”<sup>34</sup> So, too, were drums often used as a way to govern communal life in the region. Historian

28. Larry E. Ivers, *This Torrent of Indians: War on the Southern Frontier, 1715–1728* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 19.

29. Ivers, 20.

30. Ivers, 21–22. Ivers indicates that “Each company’s drummer had a snare drum, used to produce standard patterns of drumbeats that transmitted the commander’s orders to his men.” Moreover, “drums, colors, and half pikes were purchased from London suppliers.”

31. Ivers, *This Torrent of Indians*, 179; Kim Purcell, “Fort King George,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (5 September 2018), <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/fort-king-george>.

32. M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663–1763* (Williamsburg, VA: Institute of Early American History and Culture; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 156–157; Edward J. Cashin, *Guardians of the Valley: Chickasaws in Colonial South Carolina and Georgia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 1–2, 15, 156n11; Ivers, *This Torrent of Indians*, 184.

33. Newton D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York: MacMillan, 1916), 250; qtd. in Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 125. As Black feminist theorist Christina Sharpe notes, “Martial metaphors and the language of surveillance” are key aspects of white supremacy’s legacy in the United States. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 91.

34. Gordon, “What Mr. Jefferson Didn’t Hear,” 118.



Peter Wood, for instance, surmises that, based on testimony from nineteenth-century Charleston resident D. E. Huger Smith, eighteenth-century enslaved blacks may have used drum signals to indicate the curfew for enslaved people in that city.<sup>35</sup> Reports of the October 6, 1723 announcement of the repeal of the Charleston Government Act of 1722 indicate that time was regularly kept using drums in pre-Stono Charleston: “Provost Marshall William Loughton caused the governor’s proclamation [of the repeal] to be published as customary by the beat of drum at the twelfth hour, afterwards posting it on the watchhouse by the city waterfront.”<sup>36</sup> Although these reports do not provide specific evidence of the presence of colonial drumming in the aftermath of the Stono Rebellion and the 1740 Negro Code, it is undoubtedly easy to connect Huger Smith’s nineteenth-century recollections with pre-Stono reports and to imagine a Charleston—and, in fact, a South Carolina, more generally—that was rife with the sounds of colonial drums, but that, after Stono, was bereft of African diasporic drumming.

### The Limits of Resilience Narratives

Much scholarship on African diasporic music—particularly in the United States—focuses on the resilience of musical traditions and the musicians and communities that support them in the face of the physical and cultural violence emerging from colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow, mass incarceration, and the myriad other ways that white supremacy is inflicted on black bodies. Thus the ring shout and the spiritual are explained as logical outgrowths of prohibitions against the religious practices of enslaved Africans in the British colonies of North America, the blues as a framework for expressing the struggles of sharecropping (what one scholar has described as “slavery by another name”), and hip hop as a form of resistance to systemic poverty and government-supported efforts to create segregated neighborhoods through urban housing projects.<sup>37</sup> Narratives of resistance and resilience are powerful ones for people

35. Wood, *Black Majority*, 125n114. Wood is extrapolating from D. E. Huger Smith, “A Plantation Boyhood,” in Alice R. Huger Smith, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties* (New York: William Morrow, 1936), 94. Similarly, an 1808 report also notes such uses for drums: John Lambert, *Travels through Canada and the United States of North America in the Years 1806, 1807, and 1808*, 2nd ed., II. (London: C. Craddock and W. Joy, 1814), 127, qtd. in Lucius Gaston Moffett and Joseph Médard Carrière, eds., “A Frenchman Visits Charleston, 1817,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 3 (July 1948), 141n35.

36. Bruce T. McCully, “The Charleston Government Act of 1722: A Neglected Document,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 83, no. 4 (October 1982), 305–306.

37. See, respectively, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., “Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1991): 265–287;

who have been marginalized by white supremacy. In providing historical contexts, they can provide models for people who are fighting against injustice in the present day.<sup>38</sup> Yet, they can also be problematic because they can be used unintentionally to reproduce the very racist beliefs, practices, and structures that required resilience to begin with. As folklorist Dorothy Noyes has suggested, narratives of resilience frequently obscure the proximate cause of trauma, focusing on the ways that people recover from violence, disaster, and other events and failing to offer critical insight into their causes. Although resilience is often viewed as a positive attribute and a contributing factor to the short- and long-term survival of individuals and communities, then, it is necessary to consider the reasons that resilience was necessary in the first place. And, using the tools of restorative justice, it is also necessary to consider what actions might be taken to remedy the systemic injustices that have led to these traumas.<sup>39</sup>

Notions of African American *musical* resilience in the British colonies of North America are intimately linked with white supremacy, not only through the brutal realities of the slave trade and the treatment of enslaved Africans in the colonies, but through the deliberate efforts to quash their music making. The decision to write a ban on the drumming practices of enslaved Africans in South Carolina in the Negro Code of 1740 was an obvious and deliberate act of retribution against enslaved persons who launched the Stono Rebellion in the previous year.<sup>40</sup> As sociologist Barbara Ehrenreich has implied, such bans may have compounded the traumatic effects of enslavement, noting that, “if the oppressed gained nothing more from their ecstatic rituals and cults than a ‘psychic benefit,’ to use [sociologist Bryan] Wilson’s phrase, we must still concede that—to people who had lost their traditions, their land, and often

Sandra Jean Graham, *Spirituals and the Birth of a Black Entertainment Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 3–9; William R. Ferris, *Blues from the Delta* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978); Murray Forman, *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002). The phrase “slavery by another name” comes from the title of Douglas A. Blackmon’s *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Random House, 2008).

38. Ian Michie, “‘Toward a Truer World’: Overt and Implied Messages of Resistance from Slave Songs to Rap,” in *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism*, ed. Eunice Rojas and Lindsey Michie, vol. 1, *Activism in the United States* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013), 1–20; Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press; Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, 2003); Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 270.

39. Dorothy Noyes, *Humble Theory: Folklore’s Grasp on Social Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 410–429.

40. Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 19.

their freedom—a psychic benefit is no small thing.”<sup>41</sup>

The 1740 Negro Code was, in no uncertain terms, an act of white supremacy at work. Slave drumming was replaced by colonial drumming. Although it was certainly not the most reprehensible aspect of the code, its symbolic violence made it one of the cruelest. In the nearly three centuries since the law’s passage, narratives of African American musical resilience have been powerful tools to unite African Americans and members of the African diaspora around a variety of significant political and social issues. But, by focusing principally on musical and cultural resilience in the music history classroom, it is easy to downplay the fundamental truth that white supremacy was the proximate reason that such resilience was necessary in the first place.

### Unit Plan

To introduce students to the significance of the Stono Rebellion and 1740 South Carolina Negro Code, we propose a unit for the undergraduate music history survey course that explicitly links the musical expression of enslaved Africans to their lives in Africa and the Americas, the music of European settler-colonists to their lives in Europe and the Americas, and the music of indigenous peoples. Extending the repertorially inclusive models offered by proponents of multiculturalism in the music history classroom of the 1990s and 2000s, we engage educator Enid Lee’s observation that “multicultural education often has come to mean something that is quite superficial: the dances, the dress, the dialect, the dinners . . . without focusing on what those expressions of culture mean: the values, the power relationships that shape the culture,” and we heed her call for a model of “anti-racist education . . . [that] attempt[s] to look at—and change—those things in school and society that prevent some differences from being valued.”<sup>42</sup> In so doing, we call attention to the ways that white supremacist attitudes have shaped musical life in the Americas and model a contextual, evaluative approach for the study of the music of slaves around

41. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (New York: Holt, 2007), 178.

42. Enid Lee, qtd. in “Taking Multicultural, Anti-Racist Education Seriously: An Interview with Enid Lee,” in *Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for Racial and Cultural Justice*, ed. Wayne Au (Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 2009), 10. Christopher Wilkinson offers a useful model of multiculturalism in the music history classroom in “Deforming/Reforming the Canon: Challenges of a Multicultural Music History Course,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 259–77, as well as in “A New Master Narrative of Western Musical History: An American Perspective,” in *De-Canonizing Music History*, eds. Vesa Kurkela and Lauri Väkevää (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 37–48.

the year 1740. The unit we propose is based on the assumption of a thrice-weekly schedule with approximately fifty minutes per class meeting and a two-semester course sequence. Longer class sessions (say on a 75-minute Tuesday/Thursday schedule) or lengthier course sequences may prove to be more useful in engaging students in discussion, research, and other activities (see Figure 1).<sup>43</sup>

CLASS SESSION	TOPIC	READING, LISTENING, AND/OR SCORE STUDY
CLASS #1	Capitalism, Colonialism, and the 18th-Century Atlantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clint Smith, “August 1619,” <i>The New York Times 1619 Project</i> (<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/african-american-poets.html">https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/african-american-poets.html</a>).</li> <li>• Understanding Slavery Initiative, “The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Introduction,” (<a href="http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=369&amp;Itemid=145.html">http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=369&amp;Itemid=145.html</a>).</li> <li>• Khalil Gibran Muhammad, “The Sugar that Saturates the American Diet Has a Barbaric History as the ‘White Gold’ that Fueled Slavery,” <i>The New York Times 1619 Project</i> (<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html">https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html</a>).</li> </ul>
CLASS #2	New Modes of Expression in European Instrumental Music: <i>Empfindsamer Stil, Style Galant, Sturm und Drang</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burkholder, <i>History of Western Music</i>, Ch. 20</li> <li>• <i>Norton Anthology of Western Music [NAWM]</i> 116, 117, 118, 119</li> </ul>
CLASS #3	Opera in Transition: Comedy, Drama, and Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burkholder, Ch. 21</li> <li>• <i>NAWM</i> 109, 110, 111, 113</li> </ul>

43. In recognizing the importance of discussion to this work, we are especially influenced by bell hooks’s observation that “conversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator.” bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 44.

CLASS #4	CASE STUDY: Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gabriel Banat, “Saint-Georges [Saint-Georges], Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de,” <i>Grove Music Online</i>.</li> <li>• Andrea Valentino, “The ‘Black Mozart’ Was So Much More,” <i>Atlas Obscura</i> (12 April 2017), <a href="https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/joseph-bologne-black-mozart">https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/joseph-bologne-black-mozart</a>.</li> <li>• Bologne, Violin Concerto, Op. 2, no. 1.</li> <li>• Bologne, <i>L’Amant anonyme</i>.</li> </ul>
CLASS #5	Drumming Traditions of Indigenous Americans, Enslaved Africans, and European Settler-Colonists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portia K. Maultsby, “The Translated African Cultural and Musical Past,” in <i>African American Music: An Introduction</i> (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3–22.</li> <li>• Beverley Diamond, “Traditions of Knowledge: Indigenous Knowledge and the Western Music School,” in <i>Native American Music in Eastern North America</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 1.</li> <li>• “Music in the Revolutionary War,” <i>George Washington’s Mount Vernon</i>, <a href="https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-revolutionary-war/music/">https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-revolutionary-war/music/</a>.</li> </ul>
CLASS #6	The Stono Rebellion, the 1740 South Carolina Negro Code, and Drumming in Colonial South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Richard Cullen Rath, “Drums and Power: Ways of Creolizing Music in Coastal South Carolina and Georgia, 1730–1790, in <i>Creolization in the Americas: Cultural Adaptations to the New World</i>, ed. Steven Reinhardt and David Buisseret (Arlington: Texas A&amp;M Press, 2000), 99–130.</li> </ul>
CLASS #7	The Ring Shout, Patting Juba, and the Musical Resilience of Enslaved Africans in the Americas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The McIntosh County Shouters</i> (Smithsonian Folkways FW04344, 1984), liner notes and recordings.</li> <li>• Library of Congress, “McIntosh County Shouters: Gullah-Geechee Ring Shout from Georgia,” 12 April 2011, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxPU5517u8c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxPU5517u8c</a>.</li> </ul>
CLASS #8	Summative Exercise	

FIGURE 1. Sample unit plan.

In this unit, the core issues typically addressed in a music history textbook and anthology are still very much present. Students are exposed to new approaches to instrumental composition at the beginning of the Classical period, the development of the sonata principle, and debates over the future of

opera. But these concepts are accompanied by a study of the lives and musical expressions of indigenous people and POC, including those with access to power and those with little recourse to fundamental human rights. Framed within the context of transatlantic exchange, students witness contemporaneous musical developments in West Africa, the Americas, and Europe, helping to avoid the all-too-common erasure of Black musical history.<sup>44</sup> Instructors may also find it valuable to engage students in a variety of writing projects around this work, including more conventional assignments such as journals or research papers, as well as creative expression through poetry, songwriting, or other expressive media.<sup>45</sup>

Although we have presented a unit focusing on music of the eighteenth century, this approach could also be modified for any number of settings in the typical post-1750 undergraduate music history survey. For instance, a unit on the nineteenth century might take blackface minstrelsy as a primary focus, tracing its appropriation of the African-derived banjo and its use of racialized caricature through popular music (minstrel songs), vernacular culture (old-time music), and art music (in works such as Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *The Banjo* and in the persistent use of blackface in operatic productions).<sup>46</sup> Such a unit could also engage meaningfully with changing notions of virtuosity by highlighting the case of Tom Wiggins (also known as "Blind Tom"), an enslaved man who was promoted as a keyboard virtuoso to the profit of slaveholder James Bethune; here, Wiggins could join Clara Schumann and Franz Liszt in productive discussions that touch not only on race and gender, but that draw on recent insights in disability studies, as well.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, a unit on contemporary

44. Christopher A. Waterman, "The Uneven Development of Africanist Ethnomusicology: Three Issues and a Critique," in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*, eds. Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 176; cf. Garcia, *Listening to Africa*.

45. Erinn E. Knyt, "Rethinking the Music History Research Paper Assignment," this *Journal* 4, no. 1 (Fall 2013), 27, 33; Esther M. Morgan-Ellis and Kristen Strandberg, "Practical and Engaging Alternatives to the Music History Research Paper," *Musicology Now* (13 June 2019), <http://www.musicologynow.org/2019/06/practical-and-engaging-alternatives-to.html>.

46. Philip F. Gura and James F. Bollman, *America's Instrument: The Banjo in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Robert B. Winans, ed., *Banjo Roots and Branches* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Heeseung Lee, "Retracing the Roots of Bluegrass Music through an Affrilachian Aesthetic," this *Journal* 9, no. 2 (2019): 215–233; Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, eds., *Blackness in Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Naomi André, *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

47. Geneca Handy Southall, *Blind Tom, the Black Pianist-Composer: Continually Enslaved* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999); Terry Rowden, *The Songs of Blind Folk: African American Musicians and the Cultures of Blindness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 15–34.

topics might place Childish Gambino's "This Is America" (2018) alongside Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" (1964) and Steven Stucky's oratorio *August 4, 1964* (2008) to explore artistic responses to the Civil Rights Movement and #BlackLivesMatter.<sup>48</sup>

Although these examples certainly open up the potential for discussion of musical resilience, they also present opportunities for discussions of the forces that seem to necessitate these traditions of resistance, challenging us to consider a deeply contextual framing of these acts of resistance. Moreover, by insisting on the power of Black music (pace Floyd) in our classrooms, we can create opportunities to explore—and even privilege—Black musical aesthetics on their own terms. As musicologist William Cheng has argued, "When framed within narratives of overcoming, black music is seemingly never allowed just to be, but must always formidably, laboriously be against."<sup>49</sup> As such, we present a pedagogical approach that affirms Black music's right "just to be" as well as its power to resist the violence of white supremacy.

## Conclusions

In her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Sharpe offers an ecological metaphor for understanding the immediate and long-term impacts of the transatlantic slave trade in the U.S., suggesting that what might appear to be isolated incidents of racism are actually manifestations of climatic processes:

In the United States, slavery is imagined as a singular event even as it changed over time and even as its duration expands into supposed emancipation and beyond. But slavery was not singular; it was, rather, a singularity—a weather event or phenomenon likely to occur around a particular time, or date or set of circumstances. Emancipation did not make free Black life free; it continues to hold us in that singularity. The brutality was not singular; it was the singularity of antiblackness. . . . In what I am calling the weather, antiblackness is as pervasive as climate. The weather necessitates

48. Dorren St. Félix, "The Carnage and Chaos of Childish Gambino's 'This Is America,'" *The New Yorker* (7 May 2018), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-carnage-and-chaos-of-childish-gambinos-this-is-america>; Ruth Feldstein, *Do What You Gotta Do: Black Women Entertainers and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 84–112; Daniel J. Wakin, "Two Presidents, Two Wars, One Oratorio," *New York Times* (12 September 2008), <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/arts/music/14waki.html>. See also Fernando Orejuela and Stephanie Shonekan, eds. *Black Lives Matter and Music: Protest, Intervention, Reflection* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

49. William Cheng, *Loving Music Till It Hurts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 189 (emphasis in original).

changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies.<sup>50</sup>

Resilience, then, is a by-product of antiblackness, a by-product of the transatlantic slave trade. And at the core of this antiblackness is a fundamental belief in white supremacy, a white supremacy that is also intimately bound with toxic masculinity. To recognize cultural resilience, then, is to at least implicitly acknowledge that white supremacy and toxic masculinity have long exerted structural influences in North America—and in North American schools of music and music history classrooms. Furthermore, as Loren Kajikawa has recently argued, for instance, “with few exceptions, the music of black Americans has been lumped into the nonserious category [in North American university music programs], and popular music, which throughout much of the twentieth century has been influenced directly or indirectly by the musical contributions of African Americans, is the main ‘other’ against which classical music defines itself.”<sup>51</sup> Reparative work, we argue, requires not only an acknowledgement of these efforts to marginalize the expression of Black Americans and a concerted effort to create more inclusive curricula by diversifying our playlists, but deliberate and systematic efforts to highlight the ways that white supremacy functions in schools of music and to engage in meaningful action toward dismantling structural racism in our classroom and beyond.<sup>52</sup>

Shifting the narrative in our music history classes toward white supremacy does not, however, push aside narratives of resistance and resilience. To do so would itself be an act of erasure that would do violence to the remarkable history of persistence and resistance in African American music-making. Citing drumming bans as an example, Kofi Agawu has suggested that the resilience of enslaved people and their music might be a unifying factor in African and African diasporic music; he asks, “How might we explain African music’s resilience? . . . The potency of black music lies in responsible and unyielding guardianship; it suggests a principles and committed custodianship of a shared heritage.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, examples of resilience and resistance exert remarkably

50. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 106.

51. Kajikawa, “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music,” 167.

52. We are, of course, profoundly aware of the problems that come with attempting to “dismantle the master’s house” using “the master’s tools,” but again we affirm hooks’s insistence on the classroom’s power to transform society. See Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984), 110–114; bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

53. Kofi Agawu, *The African Imagination in Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 308.



powerful forces on efforts to build solidarity among marginalized communities and to historicize contemporary problems (in Sharpe's conception, to bear witness to the climate while facing the weather), and resilience and resistance have undoubtedly shaped all forms of African American creative expression. Ethnomusicologist Ronald Radano, for instance, has argued that "Black music garners its strength and power from the integrity of a greater African-American [sic] culture forged under circumstances of enduring racial oppression. . . . Black music of real worth speaks with certitude and conviction of the rightness of blackness against the wrongness of white supremacy."<sup>54</sup> Black lesbian feminist Omise'èke Natasha Tinsley has recently argued that such narratives are especially powerful for Black queer and trans\* people, who often draw upon many narratives of resistance and resilience in their efforts to create spaces for themselves in contemporary society.<sup>55</sup> Put another way, narratives of African American cultural resilience and resistance have been and remain fundamentally important to the persistence of African Americans in a place that has always sought their subjugation, erasure, and, ultimately, death. As Janie Victoria Ward has argued:

There is a dialectic between resistance and resilience in that resistance fosters resilience. The resilient individual is able to negotiate hard times by resisting effectively, and that successful negotiation facilitates further resilience. Resistance in the black community and family provides a preventative psychosocial intervention that boosts hardiness and psychological resilience of black children. Optimal resisters are, in turn, resilient. That dialectic is an integral part of African American tradition.<sup>56</sup>

Or, to recall Alison Martin's observations, "To be resilient is to affirm black humanity."<sup>57</sup>

But just as we celebrate Black resistance and resilience, it is necessary for European Americans and their descendants to acknowledge that these narratives are directly tied to white supremacist and colonialist attitudes that contin-

54. Ronald M. Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), xii.

55. Omise'èke Natasha Tinsley, *Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018).

56. Janie Victoria Ward, "Resilience and Resistance," in *Souls Looking Back: Life Stories of Growing Up Black*, ed. Andrew Gerrod, Janie Victoria Ward, Tracy L. Robinson, and Robert Kilkeny (New York: Routledge, 1999), 181. Similar arguments may be found in Della V. Mosley, Roberto L. Abreu, and Candice Crowell, "Resistance as Resilience: How the Black Bisexual Community Keeps One Another Healthy," in *Black LGBT Health in the United States: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, ed. Lourdes Dolores Follins and Jonathan Mathais Lassiter (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 55–72.

57. Martin, "Black Music Matters," 81.

ue to shape daily life in the United States and abroad. Here, we echo Michael Eric Dyson, who, in the foreword to Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Race*, notes that "whiteness . . . has remained constant. . . . Whiteness is the unchanging variable."<sup>58</sup> We believe that it is necessary to highlight the constancy of whiteness to counter white supremacist attitudes that implicitly undergird curricula in many departments and schools of music across the United States. If, as school of music administrator Brian Pertl has recently observed, we must engage cultural change deliberately and thoughtfully as faculty members, then the music history classroom can serve as an incubator for that cultural change by opening the floor for diverse perspectives and debates over core issues facing not only music students, but society at large.<sup>59</sup>

Taking these issues into consideration, then, we suggest that music history instructors begin to consider how we might put narratives of African American musical resilience more deliberately into dialogue with the racist structures of white supremacy. In addition to deploying the tools that Thurman and Turner have offered to diversify our classrooms, such an approach might allow us to see both African American music making and musical representations of African Americans as part of a broader and more expansive history of racialized violence and efforts to be resilient in the face of trauma. This engagement with whiteness also allows us to begin having frank and often challenging conversations about the ways that whiteness continues to dominate life in music departments and schools of music. As a consequence, such a move may allow us to use our classrooms as a space to unpack the long history of white supremacy within academic music culture, decenter white musicking and recenter the voices of people of color, and perform vitally necessary anti-racist work. The approach outlined here has the potential to create opportunities for extended engagement with the ways that power and privilege have shaped the musical lives of everyone, from students and professors to orchestra audiences and people who never set foot in a university concert hall. It challenges everyone to interrogate the narratives that might be circulating in other aspects of life in a music department or school of music. And perhaps most importantly, it points to the very human agents who chose to oppress, to resist, and to be resilient. In so doing, we believe, this approach offers students the opportunity to connect with

58. Michael Eric Dyson, "Keyser Söze, Beyoncé, and the Witness Protection Program," in Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Race* (New York: Beacon Press, 2018), ix.

59. Brian Pertl, "Reshaping Undergraduate Music Education in Turbulent Times through Cultural Rather Than Curricular Change," in *College Music Curricula for a New Century*, ed. Robin D. Moore (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 41.

their own agency to dismantle structures of oppression in their work during their studies and beyond.