

Introduction: The Promise and Pitfalls of Global Music History Pedagogy

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Hegel famously thought that Africans do not have history, which he understood as unfolding in teleological development towards civilization, away from nature.¹ Against that hoary Eurocentric assumption, the claiming of global history in music studies is a liberation. For too long, the recovery of music histories outside the West was impeded by both musicological and ethnomusicological disinterest. But in recent years, the emergence of global music history² and historical ethnomusicology³ in Europe and North America has changed things. There is the exciting potential for innovative combinations or adjacencies of historical and ethnographic methods in music research, representing a significant intervention in the study of global musics that was primarily carried out in ethnomusicology in the post-WW2 period. I doubt if any serious music researcher in that period regarded global musics as being “without history,” but research practices convey their own reality, and it is obvious that history is not the primary research method employed in ethnomusicology, which usually contributes instead to in-depth knowledge of

1. Hegel refers to “Africa Proper” as “the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night.” G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. H. Clarke (New York: Dover, 1956), 91.

2. Two landmark volumes are Reinhard Strohm, ed., *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Reinhard Strohm, ed., *The Music Road: Coherence and Diversity in Music from the Mediterranean to India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Other significant publications include Mark Hipleh, *Towards a Global Music History: Intercultural Convergence, Fusion, and Transformation in the Human Musical Story* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Hyun Kyong Hannah Chang, Introduction to “Musics of Coeval East Asia,” special issue, *Twentieth-Century Music* 18, no. 3 (2021): 333–40; Pablo Palomino, *The Invention of Latin American Music: A Transnational History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); David Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); David Irving, “Rethinking Early Modern ‘Western Art Music’: A Global Music History Manifesto,” *IMS Musicological Brainfood* 3, no. 1 (2019): 6–10, https://brainfood.musicology.org/pdfs/ims_brainfood_3_no1_2019.pdf.

3. See Jonathan McCollum and David Hebert, eds., *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology* (New York: Lexington Books, 2014).

how living musical traditions are intertwined with and expressions of multiple sociocultural factors. What we show in this special issue is how music faculty, through pedagogical interventions, can help peoples who were denied their histories.

There is much of interest in the new conjunction of global musics, on the one hand, and history, on the other, but our focus in this special issue is global music history, rather than historical ethnomusicology (to my knowledge, global music history courses, while still scarce, are far more frequently found than historical ethnomusicology courses). This special issue came about out of the authors' desire to catalyze changes in music curricula by providing tools to teachers, many of whom have been approaching us individually for assistance in designing more inclusive courses. There are some teachers and students who have a budding interest in global music history courses and many who want changes to the traditional Western music history survey where it is still being taught. Our decision to publish syllabi with accompanying essays is a response to these needs.

Already well understood among many readers, the aims of inclusion through the global were initiated in ethnomusicology, and global music history is an expansion of that through the long millennia of the global musical past. As teachers, the authors of this special issue have individual pedagogical approaches and goals, but we do share a common belief that students in the third decade of the twenty-first century need to be well equipped to step out into a world of resurgent nationalism that may be combined with racism and white supremacy, as we saw towards the end of the 2010s. Where exclusively Western music history surveys still exist, the global has the potential to intervene decisively; for teachers who adopt a non-chronological case-study approach to their history courses, the content in this special issue offers a rich variety of global material to choose from. By offering a more inclusive worldview, global music history shapes young musical minds in ways that make them more prepared for the increasingly diverse contemporary world in which we live, in terms of both demographics and culture. In many contexts, global music history offers a way to document violent colonial encounters of Europeans with peoples of different geographies who may in some cases have been transported for long distances against their will. For the Americas, global music history offers an opportunity to trace music history in terms of settler colonization and the transatlantic slave trade. In different geographies, empires, and networks, global music history makes visible other forms of coloniality and interconnectivity; case studies include slave orchestras of Southeast Asia, the global spread of Arabic music during the Islamic Golden Age, and music along the Silk Road.

Global music history is relatively young, having emerged only in the 2010s, notably with a large-scale research project across six universities funded by

Reinhard Strohm's Balzan Prize (2013) and resulting in two edited volumes (see note 1). Since then a large number of scholar networks for global music history have emerged, including the American Musicological Society's Global Music History and Global East Asian Music Research study groups and the International Musicological Society (IMS) and International Council for Traditional Music's (ICTM) Global History of Music study groups. Recent conferences are certain to catalyze even more research activity: "Mobility and Transcultural in Music and Performance in Global Civilisations" (2021, ICTM Global History of Music study group), "Music in the Pacific World: Change and Exchange Through Sound and Memory" (2021, IMS Global History of Music study group), "Global Musicology – Global Music History" conference (2022), and "From Musical Bow to Zithers along the Silk Road" (2022, ICTM colloquium).

As a field, global music history is critically dependent on pedagogy in addition to research. A crucial piece in the development of our sister discipline of "world" history is precisely the teaching of it in the post-WW2 period, with efforts made towards training and providing resources for history instructors in higher education as well as high schools. There was a sense in which world history was created through the very teaching of it: the collection, presentation, and interpretation of historical facts on a global scale was most visible in world history courses, which created a demand for corresponding textbooks. The broad narrative of world history remains a central problematic when applied to music: Is music history on a global scale coherent as a narrative or collection of narratives? How can we possibly cover the totality of music history, and who would have that kind of exhaustive expertise? The essays and syllabi collected in this special issue address these questions from different angles. Each essay outlines the approach taken in relation to a syllabus or bibliography created by the author. These resources vary in coverage, with distinctions in terms of time period (since antiquity or the medieval period; the Baroque as critical framework), geographies (South and Southeast Asia), topical focus (slave orchestras), organization (chronological, geographic, thematic), and difficulty (introductory survey, upper undergraduate elective).

While world history created a more inclusive version of history, the more recent *global history* places an emphasis on global integration, showing how seemingly disparate geographies have always been intertwined.⁴ (World history, in contrast, can in principle comprise a collection of national histories without thorough examination of their interconnections.) Congruent to some extent with other inclusive and anti-racist initiatives, global history emerged with an ethical agenda, which, simply put, is to counter nationalist history

4. See Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

that tends to occlude the global picture. By focusing on a wide range of global connectivities (globalization, flow, mobility, transculturation, etc.) and their underlying integration, we may dispel the notions of supposed marked differences between, say, “Europe” and “East Asia” or “Latin America” and of cultural identities as “naturally” different. The field of global *music* history is usually closely in step with global history, and has thus mainly focused on the history of musical exchanges. Global music history is generally regarded by scholars as being focused on global encounters that traverse geographic boundaries, promoting interconnection over familiar categories of (“European,” “East Asian,” etc.) music and identity. However, national histories, often with a long lineage, may reflect more *alternate, independent materialities* (e.g., pre-Silk Road China, which was relatively insular) than the global music history emanating from the colonial and imperial centers of Europe and North America that compelled global integration for centuries. How, then, should we approach these geographically discrete histories that are often not just national but *nationalist*, a conjunction that we must always be wary of? This question remains to be addressed beyond this special issue, but I suggest that it is possible to integrate multiple centers with *varying* degrees of interconnectivity in history. In perusing the various essays and syllabi in this issue, readers will be able to sense the productive tension between relatively global and relatively insular periods of history in different geographies. In Chinese, the dialectical relation is captured in the saying “there is some of me in you and some of you in me.” In historical terms, this means that there is the global within the insular and the insular within the global. Global and insular derive their meanings from each other such that we always have to be careful about whether and why one term is elevated above another. In one sense, global interconnections show that Western music history has always been global, from the influence of Arabian poetry on troubadours to immigrant Chinese American composers such as Chou Wenchung (which is not to suggest that all roads lead to the West). But consider that insular histories are just as potent—perhaps even more potent—in disrupting Eurocentric history as global interconnections: Could it be that the pedagogical future of the global lies not entirely in rehearsing colonial connectivities in music history, but at least in part in the *obsolescence*, the *forgetting* of the West, turning instead to histories elsewhere for a moment?⁵

The fact is that relatively global and relatively insular aspects of history co-exist. Whether and how to approach insular histories in our teaching is

5. Chakrabarty conceptualizes the “provincialization” of Europe through the framework of two mutually interrupting histories of other geographies: the “pre-capital” (how other geographies were regarded as the pre-condition for capitalism in the course of being subsumed into capitalism), and the difference from capitalism (how they could not be entirely subsumed into capitalism). Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

a matter that needs to be considered in relation to the principle of *inclusion*, which relates to the thorny issue of whether it is feasible to cover the entirety of global music history. What do we lean toward when we attempt to teach the entirety of global music history versus specific interconnections, temporalities, and geographies? How do we achieve balance between depth and breadth of history? How do we avoid extremes of the micrological and macrological, when *both* micro relations between music-makers *and* the overarching, critical frame of colonization are of equal importance? What topics, geographies, and temporalities are we willing to *exclude* from a delimited semester of coursework, and based on whose criteria? These vexed questions, which have to be resolved with the particularities of faculty, students, and institutions in mind, guarantee that there will always be global music histories in the plural, as opposed to one unified narrative.

Perhaps the most important question of all has to do with decolonization. What is the best way to decolonize Western music history, or can the dismantling of colonial *cultural* forms even be called decolonization (e.g., shifting away from exclusively Western music education in Singapore and Japan), as opposed to the achievement of independence in former colonies or the removal of settlers? The answer to this last question depends on what level of recognition we give to the historical, geopolitical, sociocultural, epistemic, and psychological aspects of colonization and decolonization—not to mention the intertwined dimensions of race (including, especially, Indigenous peoples), class, gender, sexuality, and ability. There can be little doubt that continued settler colonization in the Americas demands our urgent attention, but there are other peoples living in conquered territories who are in a similar situation (e.g., Xinjiang), and peoples who may not be colonized but suffer from what are ultimately violent, exploitative, and catastrophic effects of expansionist imperialist ideologies, of which cultural imperialism is a key component orienting hearts, minds, tastes, alliances, and actions towards the imperial center, creating imperialized subjects, subjectivities, and subjection. Those who have achieved political decolonization may yet live in conditions of economic imperialism (as in many African countries caught in forever debts), US military imperialism (2003 Iraq War; intervention in South American countries to prop up bloody authoritarian regimes), or may have assimilated so well to European and North American culture that they *desire* to be imperialized (as with people who wish for their lands to become part of the United States, a phenomenon seen in East and Southeast Asia).⁶ The variegation of multiple persisting colonizations and imperialisms implies that necessarily plural decolonial strategies will differ, whether in the context of Indigenous decolonization in the United States,

6. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xiv.

agitating against the extra-legal status of US service members in military bases in East Asia (in relation to sexual violence against the local population), or the dismantling of the Western music curriculum in Chinese conservatories.⁷ What matters is the political potential set free by individual decolonial languages, whether in the laser focus on land occupation,⁸ in the concept of a “*merdeka*” history of “freedom from colonization” proposed by Singaporean writer Alfan Sa’at, or other decolonial frameworks.⁹ In relation to the many contestations in global music history outlined above, this special issue presents a range of perspectives that may inform readers’ own deliberations as we, authors and readers alike, collectively work to broaden the scope of music history education.

This second special issue on global music history from the *Journal* complements the first by offering practical as well as theoretical advice to those who may need to create entire courses on specifically the global *past* (as opposed to just global musics in general), spanning a significant geographic scale in the territories and circulations covered. Expanding on the use of key “threshold” concepts as well as European coloniality as a framework, already explored in that first special issue as a means of structuring global music history courses,¹⁰ this second special issue shows how such courses can be designed in a large variety of ways—by era, geography, and topic, or by grappling with the entirety of the “global.” In terms of theoretical issues, this special issue furthers the interrogation of the “global” begun especially by Tamara Levitz, for whom “structural white ignorance may be operating in our collective denial of how the globalization of capital is extended through the spatial project of global music history, and how little this has to do with decolonization”¹¹ (compare with my discussion above of how global pathways are often paved by European colonialism, and hence relatively insular historical periods should not simply be discarded). Furthermore, global music history, being the international academic practice of the cosmopolitan elite (exceeding the framework of a nation),

7. On the complex relation of decolonization to Western music in East Asia, see Shzr Ee Tan, “Whose Decolonization? Checking for Intersectionality, Lane-Policing and Academic Privilege from a Transnational (Chinese) Vantage Point,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 30, no. 1 (2021): 140–62. The appropriation of Western music may paradoxically be a form of decolonization.

8. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

9. Alfan Sa’at, Faris Joraimi, and Sai Siew Min, eds., *Raffles Renounced: Towards a Merdeka History* (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2021).

10. Danielle Fosler-Lussier, “Threshold Concepts for Music Studies from Global Music Histories,” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 13, no. 1 (2023): 52–63; Roe-Min Kok, “Teaching Music Colonialism in Global History: Pedagogical Pathways and Student Responses,” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 13, no. 1 (2023): 64–82.

11. Tamara Levitz, “Why I Don’t Teach Global Music History,” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 13, no. 1 (2023): 118–37, at 131.

could distract from universities' occupation of unceded Indigenous lands.¹² For the contributions in this special issue, all of which are oriented towards decolonization in some way, Levitz's article serves as a sober reminder of the depth and breadth of coloniality that inheres even in ostensibly counterhegemonic pedagogies. Not only do universities occupy unceded Indigenous land, but they also conduct imperial surveys of global geographies and cultures, mine BIPOC counterhegemonic knowledge, and maintain and propagate Eurocentric knowledge, including in the form of Western music history.

Global music history has other limitations beyond its possible continuation of coloniality. The emergence of global music history courses is a positive development in that it has enlarged the possibilities of teaching about global musics. Nevertheless, there are other ways, often grouped under musicology, of approaching global musics. We might call this the cultural studies of music, broadly speaking. For instance, cultural studies of contemporary global popular musics could focus on music as media representations, which is how most listeners engage with music—in this case, just as in popular musicology in general, historical contextualization or ethnography are supplementary to media analysis, which is the central methodology. Cultural studies could also treat Western-style concert music by global composers (including well-known avant-gardists) as objects of hermeneutic interpretation.

What the above points to is the limitation of a conception of global music history that regards its ambit as primarily “history,” when musicology as a whole has moved productively into the terrain of *meaning*. There is a sense in which attention is now focused quite closely on either historical or ethnographic methods for global music studies, with media and hermeneutic research sometimes falling into the cracks of established Euro-North American methodologies (even if newly established, as with global music history). Musicologists of the global need to embrace all methodologies available to us because the range of musical meaning and significance is not limited to that of global music *history* (circulation, scale). The study of global historical actors, actions, and discourses needs to be systematically (and not just selectively) complemented with interdisciplinary theories of all kinds that lead us to an understanding of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, subjectivity, sociocultural context, ecology, animality, aesthetics, experience, listening, capitalism, and more.¹³ Such global studies could potentially encompass historical context and/or hermeneutic meaning, historical and/or media figures, a relatively small (single site, single work, single temporal point) and/or large scale and could cover the past, the present, and/or the future. Exceeding geographic (the globe) and temporal spans (eras), as well

12. Levitz, 131–32.

13. An indicative project of this kind is the American Musicological Society Global East Asian Music Research study group's 2020 panel on “Posthumanist Musicology and East Asia.”

as circulations and scales, the field to come would simply be global studies in musicology, adopting the full range of musicological methods (history, media representations, hermeneutics, theory and analysis)—as opposed to the quintessential ethnomusicological method of ethnography. Of course, this is assuming that the current institutional division of musicology and ethnomusicology does not collapse under the weight of its contradictions (see Figure 1)—not the least of which is the existence of global music history research *across* that divide (as evidenced in the existence of study groups for global music history across ICTM, IMS, and AMS). The related pedagogical implications would have to be explored in another special issue.¹⁴

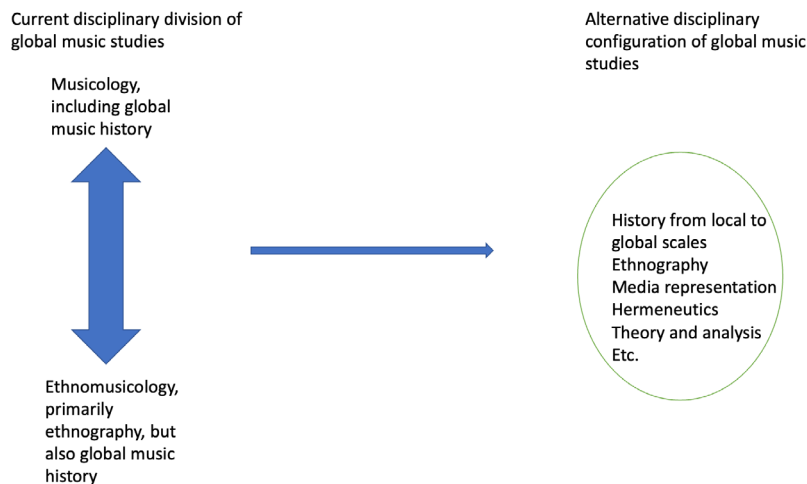


Figure 1. Disciplinary configuration of a “collapsed” global music studies.

The many problems discussed above may encourage some writers to attempt what I regard as the impossible task of positioning their work within a sphere of pure counterhegemony—by avoiding global music history altogether. But this special issue instead recognizes the complexity of a world in which counterhegemonic action emerges within hegemonic structures, a state of affairs which can be deduced from the long-standing anthropological tenet

14. Another “contradiction” is ethnographic studies of Western music. Laudan Nooshin, *The Ethnomusicology of Western Art Music* (Routledge, 2014). There is huge overlap in the current official definitions of the music disciplines. According to SEM, ethnomusicology “encompasses all geographic areas” and “ethnographic fieldwork” as well as “historical research.” According to AMS, musicology encompasses “history,” as organized by nations and regions—e.g., “South Asian music,” as well as “anthropology” of music. Following these definitions, there is no meaningful distinction between the two disciplines. See “About Ethnomusicology,” Society for Ethnomusicology website, accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.ethnomusicology.org/page/AboutEthnomusicol>; “What is Musicology?,” American Musicological Society website, accessed February 8, 2024, <https://www.amsmusicology.org/page/whatismusicology>.

that agency is exercised within (one could specify, colonial) structure.¹⁵ At issue is the multi-faceted nature of real-world phenomena that cannot be reduced to binary structures with counterhegemony and hegemony occupying different locations (whether conceptual, cultural, or geographic), such that global music history, for example, can only be associated with one or the other. Criticisms that have been raised of global music history are all valid—an emphasis on circulation over locality that can replicate colonial routes linking Western and global sites; the capitalist retracing of those colonial routes; the potential for global music history to become disconnected from inequalities on the ground. Yet global music history has become one of the most powerful ways of countering exclusively Western music history, in part by recognizing Indigenous music histories. None of this can be unified into a simple narrative, and attempts to maintain a purified stance can often lead to inadvertently regarding certain BIPOCs, even those who hold a counterhegemonic agenda—including global music historians from myriad geographies—with a vampiric logic, as if they were “dead” or at best unaware, duped into becoming colonial mouthpieces replicating colonial-capitalist ideology.¹⁶ There is a risk of returning to hoary racist ideologies that have treated Indigenous and Black peoples precisely as “dead”—in the sense of voided agency (in slavery) and of spatiotemporal extension (in the British treatment of, for example, Australia as *terra nullius*, an empty land that is available for occupation). This approach treats certain past, present, and future BIPOCs who are real-world musickers or contemporary intellectual figures (such as ethno/musicologists) as “dead.” It happens when writers are too quick to dismiss counterhegemonic frameworks (such as global music history), which feature historical BIPOC figures and in which a sizable number of BIPOC scholars participate (often due to cultural affiliation), such that these potentially emancipatory frameworks are sidestepped altogether because of their complexity.

Rather than avoiding global music history, authors of this special issue have a specific dedication to the articulation of colonial and decolonial narratives. All of the resources either encompass or incorporate consideration of indigeneity, whether in the Americas and Australasia or elsewhere (e.g., non-settler colonies), where the term signifies differently. This approach takes BIPOCs seriously, both in global music history and as global music historians, while dealing with the complexities of coloniality, capitalism, circulation, and other differentials of power. Global music history especially needs to rethink the

15. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

16. On a similar phenomenon in global musical modernisms studies, see Gavin S. K. Lee and Christopher Miller, “Introduction to the Special Issue on Global Musical Modernisms,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 20, no. 3 (2023): 274–91, at 285.

axiomatic principle of circulation, which may end up excluding wide swathes of BIPOCs (both historical figures and contemporary music scholars), and instead embrace both relatively insular and global eras and geographies. Beyond this special issue, there is much work to be done in highlighting the capitalist history of mass media music and its global circulation (for example, in commercial “world music”) as one means of flagging the capitalist logic of global expansionism that global music history cannot be disassociated from entirely.

The critical problematics of global music history raised above acknowledge that there is much more to be considered on the subject of global music history and its pedagogy than can be contained in this special issue. Here, our overarching goal is to share resources in hopes of furthering both conceptualization and pedagogical practice of global music history, for specific pedagogical practices reflect particular conceptions of what “global music history” implies. Following this introduction are a bibliography with preamble and four syllabi preceded by short essays or full-length articles. The preamble and essays briefly introduce the thinking behind the teaching resource, while the articles provide extended discussion of pedagogical and global historiographic issues. Of the teaching resources, two cover the breadth of global music history while the remaining three are defined by time period (global Baroque), geography (South and Southeast Asia), and topic (slave orchestras). We hope readers will find what they need in these pages to take a first step into global music history or to extend their existing involvement with it.