

# Slave Orchestras, Choirs, Bands, and Ensembles: A Bibliography

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The institution of the slave orchestra and slave ensembles dates back to the first recorded example we know of, the nine Black musicians brought to Manila in 1594/5, and lasted until slavery formally ended worldwide in the late nineteenth century. In some cases, even after slavery was abolished, colonial powers continued to practice it, though not by that name, until the early twentieth century. A global approach to music history should include these centuries of forced musical assimilation and labor that coincide with colonialism and the global slave trade.

Understanding the history of classical music outside Europe and North America needs to first place into context the fact that many of these slave orchestras and ensembles continued as institutions operated and populated by former slaves and, second, that many types of musical styles and genres developed as their direct descendants. Understanding hybridity in ensembles gets increasingly complicated when we take into account that the slaves who comprised these institutions were from all parts of the world, as local Indigenous peoples were also enslaved in colonial countries. For example, an estimated one to two million Indonesians were part of the Indian Ocean and Trans-Pacific slave trade and constituted many of the ensembles in East Asia, South and Southeast Asia, as well as possibly South Africa.

This bibliographic resource was created as an aid to understanding the centuries-long history of slave ensembles and is a work in progress.<sup>1</sup> General pieces are listed first, followed by sources ordered alphabetically by modern common names used in the Anglophone world. From an academic and scholarly

1. The first iteration of this bibliography may be found at *Mae Mai* at this URL: <https://silpayamanant.wordpress.com/socbe-bib/>. This site is also listed below in the “General” section. While Andita states the bibliography is comprehensive, I have barely begun adding the primary sources to which many of these secondary sources refer. Such additions will greatly improve this resource. Aniarani Andita, “*Mae Mai*. Produced by Jon Silpayamanant. In English. URL: <https://silpayamanant.wordpress.com/>,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 54, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 93, <https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2022.7>.

standpoint, it is important to understand that many of the sources are in native and Indigenous languages rather than the language of the colonizing powers. Most of the accounts that Western scholarship has access to are descriptions in reports or diaries by officials and tourists. This reality shows the sharp divide between Western musicology, with its Eurocentric language focus, and local, Indigenous literature and oral histories. Indeed, this Eurocentrism has made it far too easy to ignore the global history of classical music and its relationship to colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy.

While some readers may want to use this bibliography to construct an entire course, another approach is to incorporate a few items into current Western music history courses as microlessons. For example, instructors may draw on Fosler-Lussier's work (2020) to connect the orchestra of Indonesian slaves in nineteenth-century Batavia (Jakarta), who performed the music of European composers for their owner, Eurasian Dutch colonist Augustijn Michiels, to the 1855 Netherlands premiere of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Such an approach acknowledges the racism inherent in Western music history and can be a first step in addressing it.

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