

Preface to the Revised and Expanded English Edition

Musical interculturality and intercultural composition have been addressed as concepts somewhat more often in music studies in recent years. Many of these scholarly activities emerge from the globalizing and transnational dynamics whose preconditions and musical consequences form the core of this book. A motivation shared by scholars working in this area is surely what Tobias Janz and Yang Chien-Chang have termed “Decentering Musical Modernity” in their volume of collected essays, edited by transcript in 2019, which reconsiders more recent concepts of historical analysis such as “multiple modernities” and “entangled histories” for musicology, concepts which have also been influential for the newly added and revised parts of the present book.¹ Although we have been now aware for some time that gender, racial, social, historical, and cultural biases surround research and teaching of music history and music theory in multiple ways, the actual musical repertory tackled in research projects, publications, and theory and history classes often remains restricted to works of the Western, white, and classical canon. Recently, in a plenary talk first given in 2019 at the Plenary Session of the Annual Conference of the Society for Music Theory (SMT), Yayoi Uno Everett distinguished two main issues to be addressed in what she describes as “counter-framing the East-West binary”: “a greater inclusion of this [non-Western] repertory into the canon and [...] diversifying methods of analysis.”² Indeed, against the backdrop of political upheavals in the USA, recent activities within the SMT have prompted a group of theorists to publish an “Open Letter on Antiracist Actions Within SMT” which criticized “the structural force of white supremacy in our discipline.” According to the letter, “we all need to ask ourselves: What have I done as an individual to perpetuate existing white supremacist systems of power and inequity in our field?”³ The situation is further reflected by the 2020 publication of Philip A. Ewell’s article “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame” in *Music Theory Online*, also first presented as a plenary talk at the 2019 Plenary Session of the Annual Conference of the SMT, an article that broadly reflects on the deep and long-established cultural, social, and racial processes of exclusion in our disciplines.⁴

Some of the original impulses that sparked my interest in what is presented in this book had been similar observations, although they might have appeared somewhat less pressing or violent in the European context twenty years ago. On the one hand, the narrowness of reper-

1 Janz and Yang, *Decentering Musical Modernity*.

2 Everett, “From Exoticism to Interculturalism.”

3 “Open Letter on Antiracist Actions Within SMT,”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pneo6DbjDt-umeo6JMtcsf1jpbLDkMZgw3mRFORepE>.

4 Ewell, “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame.”

toire studied at music academies and during musicology programs at universities was all too obvious during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when even the impulses of Anglophone critical musicologies could hardly be felt. The continuous isolation of ethnomusicological and historical branches of musicology contributed (and arguably still contributes to some degree) to this unsatisfactory situation. Well into the new millennium, intercultural composition was denounced in German-language music journalism as an escape into “distant illusory worlds” or an arrangement of “stolen ideas and objects.”⁵

This made it increasingly obvious to me that the very reality of interculturality in musical life, past and present, was something that gnawed at some hidden point as a critical voice in the ear of the purely academically Western-trained and oriented composer, music theorist, or music historian. The tendency toward global standardization of compositional idioms based on models of a “historical avant-garde” legitimized by Western musical history ultimately contradicts this aesthetic reality, as does the geographically ubiquitous commercialization and banalization of traditional music genres.

While culture and identity have been acknowledged as key areas of popular music studies for some time, an intensified examination of the consequences, aporias, and potential of cultural globalization in the historical and analytical interpretation of new art music not only seems to be urgent, but has become the only conceivable standard for a present in which “cultures” are in an unprecedented process of transformation, mixing, and overlap – but also (still) in confrontation with one another. Recent writings on intercultural composition and the historical processes it involved and involves have taken up this challenge hands-on during the seven years since the original edition of this book appeared, showing how transnational meetings and associations such as the Darmstadt International Summer Course (since 1946),⁶ the Asian Composers League (founded in 1973),⁷ or the Dutch Musicultura Meetings (since 1974)⁸ increased the interconnectedness and awareness of globalized forms of music-making in the context of the Cold War. However, as Hilary Vanessa Finchum-Sung explains, “insider/outsider dichotomies have remained foundational to the reception and interpretation of compositions by non-European, non-U.S.-American composers into the new millennium.”⁹ The conclusion drawn from this, as formulated by Yang Chien-Chang, namely “to avoid the East-West binary opposition, so that a more entangled web of the history can be revealed,”¹⁰ is shared by the studies presented here. They also demonstrate that the earlier focus of many composers and scholars on the musical materialization and reception of cultural difference has given way to increasingly complex forms of ambiguity,¹¹ not least in relation to new processes of migration and cultural multiplicity that feed into a continuous decentering, readjusting, and sometimes reaffirming of identity concepts in and through music.

Although the present book attempts neither a history nor a theory of intercultural music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in an all-encompassing sense, the revised and expanded edition strives to demonstrate the potential of entangled historical perspectives more

5 Boehmer, “Globalisierung als heimischer Fetisch,” 44 (“in ferne Scheinwelten [...] fliehen,” “Arrangeur geklauter Ideen und Objekte”).

6 See Caitano, “Intercultural Perspectives in the International Summer Courses for New Music.”

7 See Yang, “Technologies of Tradition in Post-War Musical Avant-Gardism.”

8 See Langenkamp, “Close Encounters of Another Kind.”

9 Finchum-Sung, “Foreword: Aesthetics of Interculturality in East Asian Contemporary Music,” 8.

10 Yang, “Technologies of Tradition in Post-War Musical Avant-Gardism,” 43.

11 See Lee, “Postcolonial Affect” and Lee “Introduction: From Difference to Ambiguity.”

comprehensively than the original German edition, especially in the newly added Chapters II.2, II.4, and II.5. While many of the added parts include a broader approach combining institutional, sociocultural, and analytical perspectives, the core methodology pursued in most chapters may be described as a “bottom-up” focus on what has been called “artistic agency,”¹² including reflections on performance, perception, and reception. Many intercultural musical processes discussed in this book emerged from grassroots projects without much institutional support, sustained by the composers’ and the performers’ shared enthusiasm for the area. The observation that a “re-negotiation of new cultural spaces” in intercultural composition is often based on “intimate artist-to-artist, musician-to-musician collaborations”¹³ and requires a community of dedicated listeners describes unstable preconditions that cannot be taken for granted today or in the future. This makes it obvious that within the often socially and institutionally marginalized sphere of contemporary music, intercultural composition may easily be considered an ephemeral and peripheral phenomenon. It is implied in this book’s multiple narratives that, on the contrary, composers who have continuously scrutinized the cultural and historical prejudices of our listening provide models of musical interculturality that should be valued as key elements of a globalized music-historical process. Certainly, the book’s most important aim is to suggest a change in focus by bringing these new geographies, new protagonists, and new ideas to the center of historiographical attention. Installing these composers as key figures of a grand “world music history,” however, would likely fail to grasp the fragmented, fluctuating, and decentered musical cultures of the past century, as outlined in Chapter II. A more moderate implication of the research presented here, then, might be that all music is in a fundamental sense intercultural, and that the hybrid or composite character of the historical constructs of “Western” or “non-Western” music today and their long history continuously demand new perspectives in music research as well as in composition, performance, and listening, perspectives that challenge and discard long-held stereotypes and canonized thinking.

Vienna, 17 September 2020

12 Finchum-Sung, “Foreword: Aesthetics of Interculturality in East Asian Contemporary Music,” 16.

13 *Ibid.*

