



REVISITING THE POPULAR IN MUSIC HISTORY

Derek B. Scott

ROUTLEDGE



Revisiting the Popular in Music History

This book brings together a significant part of Derek B. Scott's diverse academic work, showing that the cultural history of music matters not only for the understanding it can bring to the meaning and purpose of music-making, but also because it can play a role in the development of social justice and a democratic culture. Where music history is concerned, Scott argues that we should offer interpretations that question the extent to which critics and historians have prized ethnicity and nationality in artistic works. No branch of the arts furnishes more examples of borrowing, re-using, and appropriating across cultures than music, and this is especially evident today in forms of popular music on all continents around the world. The global and the local are not the oppositional entities they once were. A history that focuses on cosmopolitanism resonates with the world in which we now live: a world of migration and tourism, involving the constant transfer, exchange, translation, and adaptation of different cultural practices and artifacts. Most of the articles in the collection have previously been published in hard-to-find conference proceedings and edited volumes or have not been published at all. The book will be important for those studying musicology, music history (especially of popular music styles), and cosmopolitanism.

Derek B. Scott is Professor of Critical Musicology (Emeritus) at the University of Leeds. His research field is music, cultural history, and ideology, and his books include *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (2008), and *Musical Style and Social Meaning* (2010). He was General Editor of Ashgate's Popular and Folk Music Series for fifteen years, overseeing the publication of more than 140 books between 2000 and 2015.



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First published 2026
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-041-10741-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-10742-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-65659-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003656593

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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Acknowledgements

Many of the chapters of this book have their origins in keynote addresses given at international conferences in Australia, Europe, and North America. A list of the conferences in which their ideas and arguments were first presented is given here, together with information regarding any prior publication of material they contain. They have all undergone various degrees of revision and been elaborated with additional text.

1. 'Why the Cultural History of Music Matters'. My valedictory lecture at the University of Leeds, 22 June, 2022, drawing from a keynote lecture on 'Cosmopolitan Musicology' given at the 17th Nordic Musicological Congress, Aalborg University, Denmark, 11–14 August 2015, and an invited paper, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Global Circuits of Popular Music', for *The Musical Fabric of Globalization*, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 27–29 June 2019. Some parts of this chapter appeared in my essay 'Cosmopolitan Musicology', in *Confronting the National in the Musical Past*, edited with Elaine Kelly and Markus Mantere (London: Routledge, 2018), 17–30.
2. 'Occidentalism, Auto-Orientalism and Global Fusion in Music' was a keynote address at the conference *Radical Music History*, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, 8–9 December 2011. It was first published in Vesa Kurkela and Markus Mantere, eds, *Critical Music Historiography: Probing Canons, Ideologies and Institutions* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 141–58.
3. 'Imagining the Balkans, Imagining Europe: Balkan Entries in the Eurovision Song Contest' was a keynote lecture the conference *The Ottoman Past in the Balkan Present*, organized by the Finnish Institute at Athens and the Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies, University of Athens (30 September–2 October 2010). It was first published in Risto Pekka Pennanen, Panagiotis Poulos and Aspasia Theodosiou, eds, *Ottoman Intimacies, Balkan Musical Realities* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute at Athens, 2013), 157–69. It is reprinted here with the permission of the Finnish Institute at Athens.
4. 'Irish Nationalism, British Imperialism, and Popular Song' was a keynote address given at the Musicological Society of Australia, 35th Annual Conference, School of Music, Australian National University, Canberra, 3–5 December 2012. It was first published in Pauline Fairclough, ed., *Twentieth-Century*

Music and Politics: Essays in memory of Neil Edmunds (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 231–48.

5. ‘Invention and Interpretation in Popular Music Historiography’ was a keynote given at *Zur Historiographie populärer Musik*, the 23rd Annual Meeting of Arbeitskreis Studium Populärer Musik, Basel, 22–25 November 2012. It was first published in Dietrich Helms and Thomas Phleps, eds, *Geschichte wird gemacht: zur Historiographie populäre Musik, Beiträge zur Populärmusikforschung*, 40 (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2014): 41–54. It is reprinted here with permission of Transcript-Verlag: doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839425107.41 (2014).
6. ‘Policing the Boundaries of Art and Entertainment’ was a keynote given at *Kulturkritik und das Populäre in der Musik*, Schloss Mickeln, Heinrich Heine Universität, Düsseldorf, 21–23 March 2014. It was first published in Fernand Hörner, ed., *Kulturkritik und das Populäre in der Musik* (Münster: Waxmann-Verlag, 2016), 53–64. doi.org/10.15203/ATeM_2016.08 and is reprinted here with permission of Waxman-Verlag.
7. ‘John Clare and Folksong’ was an invited paper, ‘John Clare the Pioneering Folk-Music Collector’, given at the symposium *John Clare and Song: Exploring the Relationship Between Clare’s Poetry, Song and Music*, University of Cambridge, 27 February 2019.
8. ‘Bawdy Songbooks of the 1830s’ was an invited paper at the 8th Biennial Conference for Music in 19th-Century Britain, Queen’s University Belfast, 21–24 July 2011. A longer version is published as my introduction to *Bawdy Songbooks of the Romantic Period*, Volume 4 (London: Routledge, 2012).
9. ‘Music, Morality, and Rational Amusement in the Victorian Middle-Class Soirée’ was a keynote lecture and recital at the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies Conference, University of Iowa, 1–2 April 2004. This chapter was first published in Bennett Zon, ed., *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 83–101.
10. ‘Dance Bands and Moral Propriety in 1920s Britain’ was a keynote lecture at the conference *Popular Song in Europe in the 1920s*, University of Rouen-Normandie, France, 8–9 June 2023. I incorporated and revised some material from earlier research that had appeared in two publications: ‘Incongruity and Predictability in British Dance-Band Music of the 1920s and 1930s’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 78/2 (1994): 290–315; and ‘The Jazz Age’, *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, Vol. 6, ed. S. Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 57–78.
11. ‘Johann Strauss Jr and Nineteenth-Century Operetta as Intermedial Art World’ was a keynote given at the symposium *Worlds Within Works of Art*, University of the Arts, Helsinki, 28–29 January 2016.
12. ‘Comic Style and Character Psychology in the Music of Arthur Sullivan’ is based on a public lecture, ‘When does the Humour Rely on Sullivan’s Music?’, given at the International Symposium on Gilbert & Sullivan, as part of the 20th International G&S Festival, Buxton, 7–9 August 2013, and also on a paper

- given at the 18th Biennial International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, Toronto, 18–21 June 2014. It was published in Olli Heikkinen, Kaarina Kilpiö, Markus Mantere, *et al.*, *Valistus on viritetty: Esseitä musiikista, huvittelusta ja historiasta* (Helsinki: Sibelius-Akatemian julkaisuja, 2014), 203–27.
13. ‘Gilbert & Sullivan and Delicate Sexual Matters’ was a public talk given for the Manchester Gilbert and Sullivan Society, at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester, 7 April 2024. The first section reworks some content from my brief article on Gilbert and Sullivan in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Love, Courtship, and Sexuality Through History*, Vol. 5: The Nineteenth Century, ed. S. Mumm (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 93–94. It also includes a discussion of Reginald Bunthorne that draws on my chapter ‘The British Dandy on the Popular Musical Stage (1867–1915)’, in K.A. Hansen, E. Askeroi & F. Jarmen, eds, *Popular Musicology and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2020), 16–31.
 14. ‘Music Hall: Regulations and Behaviour in a British Cultural Institution’ began as a paper presented at *The Future of Music History*, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art, Belgrade, 28–30 September 2017, published in *Музикологија (Musicology)*, 26 (Journal of the Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2019): 61–74. It appeared in extended form as Chapter 3 in *Institutionalization in Music History*, which I co-edited with Olli Heikkinen and Saijaleena Rantanen (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy DocMus Research Publications 19, 2023), 37–52. It is reprinted here with the permission of *Музикологија*.
 15. ‘British Musical Comedy in the 1890s: Modernity without Modernism’ was a keynote lecture given at the 11th Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Conference, University of Birmingham, 28–30 June 2017.



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Introduction

I begin this collection of essays on music and cultural history by drawing on a valedictory lecture given at the University of Leeds in 2022. In the last dozen years of my academic career, I came to believe that the time had come to stop packaging culture into distinct ethnic boxes. To achieve this, I suggested we could begin by challenging the extent to which critics and historians have prized ethnicity and nationality in artistic works. As an alternative, I recommended that we investigate musical borrowing, re-using, and adapting. The global and the local are not the oppositional entities they once were, and I argued that a reworked concept of cosmopolitanism can aid in their analysis. Such a cultural history of music would help us better understand our world of migration and tourism, and the transfer, and exchange of cultural practices and artifacts. Examples that throw light on such processes in the past hundred years are found in dance music, musical theatre, jazz, and film music, but transnational cultural exchange such as this can also be found in the nineteenth century. It does not mean, however, that the power relations involved in cultural sharing and borrowing should be ignored – and we also need to consider the thorny issue of negative constructions of cultural difference.

In my second chapter, ‘Occidentalism, Auto-Orientalism, and Global Fusion in Music’, I ask if it is possible to find an Eastern Occidentalism that works in a similar ideological manner to Western Orientalism. If so, does it leave its trace in musical practices and musical styles? For Edward Said, Orientalism was a discourse very much linked to Western imperialism. Postcolonial critics have analyzed imperial discourse to show how Western powers have perceived, controlled, and represented their colonial subjects. But where, I wondered, was the equivalent postcolonial work on the Occidental discourse of Eastern imperialism? Most academic studies of Occidentalism are concerned with *Western* discourse about the West,¹ or the views of those who hate the West.² Few scholars have investigated East-West musical interaction for evidence of an inverted form of Orientalism (in which fear and attraction are intermingled).

In presenting my arguments, I have selected examples of music from countries with historical links to the Ottoman Empire, music that might be variously described as Occidental, auto-Orientalist, or global fusion. Auto-Orientalism implies a knowingness of Western images of the East, but I want to revisit the idea that it is a politically charged subaltern use of hybridity, and to consider cultural

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stereotypes that appear to be embraced without apparent subversive intent. I also seek to understand our reactions to the sampling and mixing of styles that go by labels such as ‘global fusion’ or ‘world beat’. Theorizing these new musical fusions may, indeed, further Said’s effort to erase the boundary between East and West.³

My third chapter examines how Balkan identity has been mediated through music chosen for the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). In the first decade of the twenty-first century the contest was sometimes regarded as an arena for solidifying national alliances or airing political quarrels. In the context of an expanding European Union, and Serbia’s debut at the ESC in 2007, choices about how to represent Balkan culture – for example, whether to emphasize sameness or difference – were of considerable significance. Did the Balkans pose a threat to European unity or add to the richness of European culture?

The impact of political and social history on mediations of Balkan identity affects the very description ‘Balkan’, which some would wish to drop because of its having acquired too many negative associations: the *Balkan Times* became the *Southeast European Times* in 2003. Eurovision, however, helped to present a positive picture of the Balkans. After the ESC was held in Belgrade in 2008, the Serbian national TV director Aleksandar Tijanić said that he believed the stereotypical image of Serbia had been changed. The main question, then, was how to avoid a negative image of Balkanization as an area divided into squabbling states and, instead, to be seen in a positive light by those countries committed to a set of common aims.

My fourth chapter turns to Irish cultural history. In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said describes Ireland as a ‘continuous colonial problem’ for the British in the nineteenth century yet offers little by way of explication. In that he is not alone. There would appear to be a widespread conviction that no matter how fraught British and Irish relations have been, cultural production has rarely been affected. After Ireland became part of a United Kingdom with Great Britain in 1800, much of the population remained dissatisfied. In Belfast, whose shipyards served the needs of the British Empire, a divided population existed in the nineteenth century, already living in clearly demarcated areas, such as the Catholic and republican Falls Road and the Protestant and Unionist Shankill Road. In musical terms this division can be found in the contrast between ‘Rebel’ songs and ‘Orange’ songs. These songs offer a perspective on imperialism to set alongside that of historians. In this chapter, I ask what they add to our knowledge, looking at both content and choice of subject matter. I am also investigating the sort of music that was thought suitable for these political ideas, and why. Other issues under consideration are the feelings the songs were designed to evoke and how the music was used to police sectarian divides. My findings provide evidence of the means by which music provides symbolic support for and against political positions, or, in other words, how imperialist or nationalist sentiment can be constructed and valorized by music.

Those wishing to explore British imperialism in the context of Irish history are often confronted with silence and awkwardness. For example, Robert Young, in *Colonial Desire* (1995), states that a contemporary form of colonialism exists in

Northern Ireland but then proceeds to largely ignore Ireland. The Irish nationalist perspective does, indeed, see a colonial problem continuing, one that dates to the Anglo-Scottish settler colony established in Ulster in the early seventeenth century. Nevertheless, many cling to the notion that religion was the cause of the ‘troubles’, ignoring the historical and political reasons that link Catholicism to nationalism and Protestantism to British interests.

Part Two is concerned with contested interpretations of the popular in the cultural history of music. ‘Popular music’ is a term that over the course of the nineteenth century underwent several changes in meaning, from music made by labouring people, to music loved by people in general, to commercial music made for public consumption. In the process, it gathered some negative connotations and was condemned by some critics as trivial and undemanding entertainment music, to be contrasted with ‘art music’. Chapter 5 explores the interplay of invention and interpretation in histories of popular music. Invention may be employed as a means of solving a problem, or supplying missing information, or stimulating interest in an event by exaggerating. Invention and interpretation may come together to aid in classifying musical styles and genres. In doing so, the invention of one category of music may necessitate the invention of another, as in the case of ‘entertainment music’ and ‘serious music’. This chapter scrutinizes examples of invention and interpretation and speculates on the reasons why a historian or critic might take one or the other direction. I draw examples, for the most part, from historical and anthropological assertions regarding ethnicity, class, and gender in the production and consumption of popular music. Invention may be simply guesswork, or it may be a means of giving substance to a prejudice. It is important to distinguish between the imposition of pre-existing ideas and the effort to interpret identifiable musical phenomena. That said, it is also important to be aware that historiography deals with confusion as well as elucidation.

The discourse of nineteenth-century cultural criticism created a schism between art and entertainment, and Chapter 6 examines how it became the responsibility of critics to police the boundaries of each. This had two consequences: first, it necessitated an insistence that there was an aesthetic and not merely social distinction between higher and lower forms of cultural production; second, it required derision to be shown to any ‘inferior’ genres that dared to aspire to higher artistic status.

Cultural criticism of this type is found in the later nineteenth century in Eduard Hanslick’s reaction to the concert waltzes composed by Johann Strauss the younger and his brother Josef. In the first half of the twentieth century, it is evident in the reactions of critics who gave a scornful reception to operettas and musicals that appeared to have operatic aspirations. In the later twentieth century, it is found in the critical reception of progressive rock. Drawing upon these and other examples as brief case studies, I examine the ideas and arguments that construct a distinction between elevated forms of art and lower forms. Crucial to this distinction are the concepts of the facile and the pretentious, which play a significant role in asserting a lack of aesthetic value for certain cultural products, even if their social value as entertainment is recognized.

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Chapter 7 moves back to the 1820s and early 1830s to explore the social and historical significance of the effort made by John Clare to document the rural music of Northamptonshire. He showed an interest in collecting examples of the traditional music-making that began to disappear in mid-century. That was caused by the spread of broadsides, penny chapbooks and songsters and, a little later, by the dissemination of new popular songs spawned by the music hall boom of the 1860s. Clare was remarkable for being the first person to systematically collect songs and dances ‘in the field’, as anthropologists would now say. Some may criticize his additions to and revisions of lyrics, as he believed that the words to songs had become corrupted and degraded, but *not* the tunes. Others may think his own adding and revising of lyrics erodes the idea of folksong as something shaped by the singers of a community. Yet Clare was raised and played a part in this very community, so it is difficult to accuse him of imposing outsider values on its culture. His skill in fiddle playing, for instance, is the reason he took such an interest in collecting reels and hornpipes. He was able to read music, but he was keen to learn from the practice of other musicians, knowing that stylish playing was learned by ear.

The production of small song books, or songsters, was increasing during the period in which Clare was collecting rural music. The songsters would erode traditional rural practices, but the main market for publishers was the city. There was an urban market for songsters containing bawdy and sometimes obscene material, and this topic is studied in the first chapter of Part Three, which investigates matters of popular music and moral propriety. In 1975, George Speaight published a selection of bawdy songs that he had stumbled across at the British Museum.⁴ They were taken from songsters published by William West in the 1820s and 1830s that offer valuable insights into the musical entertainment of the London clubs, taverns, and song and supper rooms in the years before music hall. These songs had never been reprinted, and their existence was known to very few. Astonishingly, the British Library possessed many more bawdy songbooks of the same period, equally unknown to scholars. These were finally gathered together in a four-volume collection *Bawdy Songbooks of the Romantic Period*, under the general editorship of Patrick Spedding and Paul Watt.⁵ My role in this project was that of editor of the final volume, which contains songbooks published by Duncombe (1833–35), Smith (1834), and Lovelace (1833), and it is about those songs that I write in Chapter 8.

These bawdy songs are valuable for a variety of reasons, and I examine them briefly as literature and as an aid to our understanding of the social relations and social history of the period during which they were published. Many people would be tempted, I’m sure, to suggest that they are too feeble in wit to be given serious attention. The ridiculous, however, is always in a close relation to the serious. Arthur Schopenhauer believed that the serious always teetered on the brink of being demolished by laughter, remarking that ‘the relations of the sexes afford the readiest material for jokes . . . as is shown by the frequency of obscene jests’, while at the same time insisting that this would not be the case ‘if the deepest seriousness did not lie at their very root’.⁶

The songbooks are of interest for many reasons: they often name singers and the venues at which a particular song was well received (Offleys in King Street, for

instance, or the Cider Cellars in Maiden Lane). They also show that the appeal of underworld slang and ‘flash language’ to those for whom it was not everyday usage occurred well over a century and a half before ‘gangsta’ rap. The young bucks and university students buying these songbooks needed the help of slang dictionaries, which proliferated. Francis Grose’s *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785) was in an enlarged third edition in 1796, and further expanded by Pierce Egan in 1823. The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was very much the age of the dictionary. It was a period when bilingual dictionaries served the needs of trade, imperialist expansion, and emergent nationalisms around the globe.⁷ It was also a time of urbanization and a need to come to terms with the increasing diversity of the city population. Bawdy songbooks and slang dictionaries offered insight into city neighbourhoods that were largely foreign to the purchaser of the songsters.

The range of reference of the songs is wide, from the topical and local to the global. There are allusions to sporting celebrities, criminal trials, ancient Greek mythology, and significant world events such as the Russo-Turkish Wars of the later eighteenth century. The songs are richly topical, and comment frequently on contemporary social change, at the same time enhancing our knowledge of attitudes of the period to sexual relations, gender (especially manliness), ethnic minority groups in London (especially Irish, Scottish, and Jewish), religion, leisure activities, crime, social disorder, and the changes brought by industrialization and technology. In addition, the songbooks are interesting for the novel use they make of double entendres, puns, and innuendo, the tunes that they use, and the fondness for parody of existing songs.

In Chapter 9, I shift from the vulgarity of the bawdy ballad to the morally respectable drawing-room ballad. Here, I focus on music-making in the middle-class home, an activity that aligned itself with one of the fundamental ‘Victorian values’, that of *improvement*. It was the possession of this improving or edifying quality that allowed music to be described, in a favourite Victorian phrase, as ‘rational amusement’. I examine a range of issues, from what songs and piano pieces were found suitable (their various types and their moral tone), to their role in teaching lessons that improve both mind and spirit. I conclude with more general matters concerning the perceived value of music, which was, indeed, taken to be a ‘serious pleasure’ and not mere entertainment. The quality that makes the nineteenth-century domestic ballad distinct springs from the desire to teach a moral lesson, to educate people about appropriate social behaviour, or to edify and uplift them spiritually and drive them on to do good deeds. In short, American and British ballad writers and composers were often concerned with placing sentimentality in the service of other aims, and these other aims were social, moral, religious, and political rather than aesthetic.

The moral tone, whether we regard it now as healthy or not, is what makes the Victorian ballad differ from the songs that came after. The early twentieth-century ballad tends to shy away from the moral didacticism found in the previous century’s ballads. There is a transitional period during the two closing decades, when we see the variety of ballad types and ballad structures decreasing. The diversity

illustrated by songs like ‘The Lost Chord’ and ‘Come into the Garden, Maud’ gives way to the more predictable shapes of post-1880 ballads, in which irregularities are accommodated to a more obvious overall verse and refrain form. This was accelerated by the song sheet production of what in the 1890s came to be known as ‘Tin Pan Alley’ in New York.

A concern for morally wholesome and improving song lyrics may have diminished, but the question of music and propriety remained important in the next century, especially when dancing was involved. Ideas of propriety in relation to dance music have long been intertwined with issues of respectability, class, and status, and Chapter 10 examines key areas that throw light on how such matters played out in the UK of the 1920s. At the start of that decade, the threat of Americanization was felt keenly by some British institutions and caused concern about national cultural identity. A little later, an antagonism between ‘hot’ and ‘sweet’ styles of jazz surfaced. This meant that a ‘hot’ band risked losing its residency at a luxury hotel that preferred ‘sweet’ music for its supper dances. Moral propriety was of great concern to the BBC and fed into its decisions about what it thought suitable to broadcast. I conclude with a brief look at how dance bands related to gender, domesticity, ethnicity, and ‘traditional’ British values.

Part Four contains four chapters concerned with popular music and the stage. In the operettas composed in the later nineteenth century by Johann Strauss, we find a relationship between different media that is of cultural-historical interest. It is the start of something that was to become more frequent and more multilayered in the succeeding century, the development of creative practices that are conceived from the beginning in relation to several media platforms or channels of communication. Examining the compositional practice of Strauss, I argue that he does not compose for one medium and then *adapt* for another; instead, he writes music that from the outset relates to both. My use of the adjective ‘intermedial’ is intended to describe a *mutually* influencing relationship between media platforms, especially that between the dance hall and the operetta stage. Intermediality stands opposed to the *Gesamtkunst* ideal, which is one of centralization rather than dispersion. In the music dramas of Wagner, for instance, it was the composer’s wish that the arts should unite to serve the stage performance. In Strauss’s operettas, by contrast, we see the emergence of an intermedial concept of artistic creation, which from the start looks to ensure that the artistic product can be disseminated quickly and profitably via secondary and tertiary media.

The production of operetta relied on a new and distinctive art world, in the sense given to that term by the cultural sociologist Howard Becker.⁸ It was an art world populated by entrepreneurs, composers, librettists, singers, dancers, directors, set designers, costume designers, carpenters, technicians, and orchestral musicians. Moreover, it was an intermedial art world, both in the sense of being influenced by cultural activities outside of the theatre, and in generating products that were consumed via differing media platforms. Its primary medium of communication was the staged performance, but its music soon became available as song sheets for the concert hall and home, and as dance orchestra arrangements for the ballroom. It also dispersed its products through mechanical devices such as barrel organs and

barrel pianos, music boxes using cylinders or discs, and, in the last decade of the century, gramophone records and phonograph cylinders.

Chapter 12 turns its attention to another major composer of popular stage works, Arthur Sullivan. If his music is subjected to an examination covering the full spread of his comic operas, it becomes evident that two types of comic style appear frequently. These styles, unlike some other comic devices he employs, are not indebted to the *opéras-bouffes* of his influential precursor Jacques Offenbach and, instead, typify Sullivan's individual musical humour. They can be found in embryonic form in his early stage works but appear regularly from *Trial by Jury* (1875) to *The Rose of Persia* (1899).

In the first part of the chapter, I identify and analyze the techniques Sullivan deploys in creating his two most common comic styles. I also consider how they function dramatically, and how they are to be understood. The cultural-historical significance of Sullivan's use of these two comic styles is that he is more interested in character psychology, or capturing a mood, than in representing the meanings of words (employing the long-established devices known as 'word painting'). Recognition of this enables us to perceive a difference between the meaning of a particular device in Sullivan's music and the meaning of that same (or similar) device in the music of another composer. I seek to explain why Sullivan's comic devices are appropriate to the character or scene and why they strike the listener as funny. I then investigate the mixing together of his two typical comic styles in the comic operas of the 1880s and conclude with a brief survey of some of the other means by which Sullivan creates humour.

In Chapter 13, Sullivan's creative partner William Schwenck Gilbert secures a more equal share in the discussion. It is not often that the subject of sex emerges in critical or historical analysis of their comic operas, but there is no doubt in my mind that allusions to sexual behaviour can be found in these stage works, sometimes referenced indirectly by innuendo and sometimes in a more direct manner. The first half of the chapter offers a general survey, and the second half focuses on the character of the dandy, with particular attention given to Reginald Bunthorne, the 'fleshy poet' in *Patience*.

Although there may have been very few contemporary concerns about moral issues as they related to the Savoy operas, that was certainly not the case with music hall, my subject of investigation in Chapter 14. The music hall in late nineteenth-century Britain offers an example of a cultural institution in which legal measures, in-house regulations, and unscripted codes of behaviour all come into play. At times, the performers or audience were under coercion to act in a certain way, but at other times constraints on behaviour were more indirect, because the music hall created a common understanding of what was acceptable or respectable. However, sometimes insider notions of what was appropriate came into conflict with external social anxieties about music-hall behaviour. These various pressures are examined in the context of rowdiness, drunkenness, obscenity, and prostitution.

The final chapter concentrates on the popular music stage as it crosses from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. Musical comedy, a genre that developed alongside the final Savoy operas in the 1890s, has been neglected in cultural

history, and hugely successful shows of that decade, such as *The Shop Girl* and *San Toy*, have disappeared from the stage. While countless books have been written on the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan, it was not until 2004 that Len Platt published an academic book on musical comedy.⁹ Since then, other work has appeared, revealing the successful transfer of British musical comedy to continental Europe.¹⁰ However, serious studies of this genre remain small in number, and I hope, in this chapter, to stimulate interest that might lead to future research. One reason for such research is that we cannot fully understand the development of musical theatre without an understanding of musical comedies, especially since so many of them transferred successfully to Broadway. They also illustrate the necessity for making a cultural-historical distinction between modernity and the aesthetics of modernism. Musical comedies prided themselves on being modern, but they were not vehicles for modernist experimentations in musical style.

Notes

- 1 James Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Couze Venn, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (London: Sage, 2000); Alastair Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- 2 Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
- 3 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* [1978] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 327–28.
- 4 *Bawdy Songs of the Early Music Hall* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975).
- 5 Now reprinted by Routledge.
- 6 *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2 [1844], trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 99.
- 7 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 70–73.
- 8 *Art Worlds*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982.
- 9 *Musical Comedy on the West End Stage, 1890–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- 10 Tobias, Becker, *Inszenierte Moderne: Populäres Theater in Berlin und London, 1880–1930* (Munich: Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2014).

Part 1

**Popular Music and
Cultural History**



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1 Why the Cultural History of Music Matters

It is my belief that the cultural history of music matters not only for the understanding it can bring to the meaning and purpose of music-making, but also because it can play a role in the development of social justice and democratic culture. My chapter has a short title, but it has taken me a long time to reach where I am now. I will briefly retrace my footsteps along the path that led to the ideas and arguments I am setting out here.

I began my academic career with a commitment to multiculturalism and cultural relativism, and so an early research interest of mine was Orientalism, in the sense in which Said and postcolonial theorists used that term. Because I have always leant to the left politically, I was ever ready to stress the link between Orientalism and Western imperialism. I was delighted with myself for many years, until I started to have troublesome thoughts about non-Western imperialism: what about the Ottoman Empire or the Japanese Empire? Was there an Occidentalism that existed as an inverted form of Orientalism? My first thoughts on this subject were presented in an invited keynote paper at the Radical Music History Conference in Helsinki in December 2011. My more organized attempt at finding answers is on display in Chapter 2 of this collection. Finally, I began to have difficulty with a whole range of concepts from cultural hybridity to globalization. Sometimes I thought social theorists underplayed human agency, and sometimes I thought they exaggerated it. In this way, I began to conclude that a focus on cosmopolitanism would solve many of my problems – I would like to call them *our* problems – and I will explain why.

A crucial moment for me occurred during the debates in the 1990s about what exactly constituted ‘world music’. At the time, I thought a good way of obtaining insight into this question would be to examine the world music section of a large record store. I soon discovered that a vast quantity of world music was African music. I wondered how much world music featured under the label ‘Austria’, so I wandered a little further down the rows of discs from Africa to Austria and discovered just one CD of Austrian world music – a disc of zither music. Clearly, Mozart and Haydn were not world musicians. This stimulated a desire to argue that there might be another way of categorizing or hearing world music. If literary figures exist, such as Shakespeare and Goethe, who speak to the world rather than a single nation, then surely a similar claim might be made for Mozart. I admit that this world view does, of course, raise questions concerning power, privilege, globalization and colonization, as well as questions about multiculturalism.

In the twenty-first century, the optimistic vision of a multicultural society became clouded over, and even the vigorous efforts made to create such a society in Canada had met with disappointment. The Trudeau government passed its Multiculturalism Act in 1971 with the aim of establishing a Canadian citizenship that embraced diversity and tolerance. Unfortunately, at the dawn of the new millennium, this had scarcely been achieved, and the question of whether efforts to attain multiculturalism in other countries had built bridges or created social divides began to be hotly debated. Among critical commentators on this subject, Kenneth McRoberts acknowledged the strength of the argument that the policy of multiculturalism ‘has impeded rather than facilitated the integration of immigrants into Canadian society’, and Donald Cuccioletta called for a cosmopolitan citizenship that ‘recognizes that each person of the nation-state processes multiple identities that not only link him or her to their own cultural heritage, but also to the host country, continent, neighborhood, street, etc.’¹

Multiculturalism never asked anyone to be open to the culture of others, or to recognize themselves in others. It merely demanded tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and it was quite acceptable for people to occupy distinct cultural quarters within a city, living in the hope, perhaps, that a cordial relationship might spring up between one quarter and another. However, I believe the time has come to stop packaging human culture into distinct ethnic boxes. Where music history is concerned, I would argue that we should instead offer interpretations that question the extent to which critics and historians have prized ethnicity and nationality in artistic works. No branch of the arts furnishes more examples of borrowing, reusing, and appropriating across cultures than music, and this is especially evident today in forms of popular music on all continents around the world. If we turn from popular to Western classical music, we find that Chinese performers have been critically acclaimed as some of the finest. The majority of professional musicians now find themselves interpreting and performing music from a large number of different cultural traditions, and in doing so are able to create something that speaks meaningfully to our own times.

Scholars working in urban studies have in recent years been increasingly interested in exploring *transcultural* exchange, examining transformations *across* cultures, and interrogating the meaning of cosmopolitan culture. A focus on cities offers an alternative to ‘methodological nationalism’, a term coined by Ulrich Beck.² In the twenty-first century, the movements of people and the existence of transnational structures have challenged the focus on nation-states in social criticism and theory. With hindsight, we can see the beginnings of a transcultural entertainment industry in the nineteenth century. In the UK, for example, nineteenth-century transcultural exchange was seen in the import of French operettas and American blackface minstrelsy, and in the export of music hall, Gilbert and Sullivan, and musical comedy.³

The global and the local are not the oppositional entities they once were. The experience of the global touching the local and vice versa has been characterized as ‘glocalization’ by some writers.⁴ Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider contrast cosmopolitanism, as something that happens within individuals, with globalization, which takes place ‘out there’.⁵ Cosmopolitanism helps us to recognize everyday relations of interdependence that link people in various countries around the globe.⁶ Examples that exist here and now are the campaigns that involve human rights or the environment.

Motti Regev argues that in the twenty-first century there has been ‘a process of intensified aesthetic proximity, overlap, and connectivity between nations and ethnicities’, so that some cultural practices that once signified *particular* identities have become part of a complexly *interconnected* entity.⁷ Regev describes this process as aesthetic cosmopolitanism. It doesn’t follow that culture is used and consumed in the same way in different countries, and this is evident in the various adaptations made during cultural transfer and exchange. The local plays as much a part in cosmopolitanism as it does in globalization. Aesthetic cosmopolitanism requires a disposition of openness towards new cultural experience⁸ – but it also calls for the sense of recognition of the Self in the Other.

A history that focuses on cosmopolitanism resonates with the world in which we now live: a world of migration and tourism, involving the constant transfer, exchange, translation, and adaptation of different cultural practices and artifacts. Cosmopolitan theorizing has become an important means of addressing the new challenges that sociology faces in the twenty-first century, when existing concepts of society and the social are being challenged by what John Brewer describes as ‘fluid mobilities and networks of exchange that render the idea of social structure irrelevant’.⁹ In fact, fluid mobilities and networks of exchange can be found emerging in the last century, examples being the border crossings of European operetta and American jazz.

In our present century, jazz, pop music, and film are the most likely candidates to feature in accounts of cosmopolitan taste, but operetta was a forerunner. Once it was evident that the stage works of Jacques Offenbach were attracting widespread international attention, operetta became part of a new transcultural entertainment industry that developed in the nineteenth century. Long before jazz and syncopated dance music became cosmopolitan pleasures, the waltz and polka had found their way around the globe. Martin Stokes remarks that in the twentieth century record companies ‘became the dominant institutional site of global musical exchange’,¹⁰ but well before this occurred city theatres and dance halls had played a major role in cultural exchange. That is why a focus on cities offers a productive alternative to methodological nationalism. Let us take the remarkable case of Franz Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe*, known in English as *The Merry Widow*. In 1908, London’s *Daily Mail* celebrated the long-running London success of this operetta and claimed that it had been performed 450 times in Vienna, 400 times in Berlin, 350 times in St Petersburg, and 300 times in Copenhagen. The article continued: ‘It is playing every evening in Europe in nine languages’, and the writer might also have noted that it was playing in America (North and South), Africa, and elsewhere around the globe.¹¹ It should be added that adaptation to the demands of the local involved more than language translation: scene changes, interpolated numbers, and even structural revisions were common.

Cosmopolitanism embraces cultural artifacts that may be marked with place, as long as they can be uprooted and moved elsewhere. Just as reggae includes an element of Trenchtown, Jamaica, but belongs to the world, the Viennese waltz retains a Viennese dimension but belongs to the world. I will give a few examples. There are Cockney waltz songs, such as ‘Pretty Polly Perkins’ (words and music by Harry Clifton, 1863).