

Music, Knowledge, and Global Migration

Symposium held at the GHI Washington Pacific Office, April 14–16, 2024. Co-sponsored by the GHI Washington Pacific Office and the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life. Conveners: Tina Frühauf (Columbia University/CUNY Graduate Center, New York), Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), and Francesco Spagnolo (Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, UC Berkeley). Participants: Viola Alianov-Rautenberg (GHI Washington Pacific Office), Molly Barnes (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Devon J. Borowski (University of Chicago), Christian Breternitz (Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin), Samuel Cheney (University of Edinburgh), Janie Cole (Yale University), James Davies (UC Berkeley), Silvio J. dos Santos (University of Florida), Giuseppe Gerbino (Columbia University), Nicholas Mathew (UC Berkeley), Nancy Yunhwa Rao (Rutgers University), Isabel Richter (GHI Washington Pacific Office), Elizabeth Rouget (Princeton University), Kate van Orden (Harvard University).

This symposium at the University of California, Berkeley brought together two major current scholarly trends: the study of music and the study of migration. While the music-migration nexus is already an established research theme, this two-day symposium chose a new approach to this topic, as co-convenor Tina Frühauf made clear in her introductory remarks. For one, it concentrated on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – a distinct period that was crucial for migration history both because of its scale and because of the changing profile of the migrants, including many musicians and others who brought musical knowledge with them. For another, the conference chose to focus on the connection between knowledge and migration. How, the conveners wanted to know, does music function as a vehicle to carry

and develop knowledge in migration, and how does migration affect knowledge about and understanding of music on a global scale? As co-convenor Simone Lässig mentioned in her remarks, the symposium was the outcome of Tina Frühauf's cooperation with the GHI Washington Pacific Office's research focus on knowledge used by, for, and about migrants. The conference venue, the Magnes Museum at UC Berkeley, aptly fitted its theme, as co-convenor Francesco Spagnolo further pointed out: the symposium unfolded in a space where participants were physically enveloped in the memory of migration through manifold objects and layers of knowledge that were themselves transferred through migration into different cultures.

After the three co-convenors set the stage in their opening remarks, the first panel focused on music and migration in the context of Central and South America. Silvio J. dos Santos's talk zoomed in on a specific musical piece, Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Symphony No. 10* (1952–54). He analyzed how the symphony expresses a nationalist construction of early modern history that justifies the nationalization and appropriation of Indigenous people. Challenging the existing scholarship on Villa-Lobos, the talk pinpointed the stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and the erroneous notion that they were in constant migration and without a history of their own. This misconception, dos Santos argued, was instrumental in justifying settler colonialism as it denied land rights to the people who had been its caretakers for millennia. In the second talk of the panel, Christian Breternitz discussed musical transfer processes from Berlin to Central and South America around 1900. Rather than discussing pieces of music, he examined the important role musical instruments played in these processes. Breternitz's focal point was brass bands, particularly military bands. He used records of exports to Central and South America from the Berlin company C. W. Moritz, one of the largest instrument makers in Prussia at the end of the nineteenth century,

to show how brass bands were major agents through which specific musical customs were exported or introduced to many other countries.

The second panel dealt with questions of music and migration in the context of Chinese culture and society. Nancy Rao explored the topic of Chinese opera theater and nineteenth-century transpacific migration. In her paper, she concentrated on cultural production within California's Chinese population which (attracted by the Gold Rush) grew significantly in the nineteenth century. Rao particularly focused on Cantonese opera troupes and players from Guangdong who arrived in the area in the context of social and economic developments in San Francisco and California. Opera performances were important community affairs: they conveyed knowledge of ritual practices, they formed a crucial part of migrants' everyday lives, and they eventually became the public face of the Chinese community. In the second talk of the panel, Samuel Cheney discussed the musical responses of British migration to China from 1860 to 1920. His presentation was concerned with the presence of thousands of Britons who visited and lived in China and the gap between their expectations and their experiences there. Against this background, the paper considered the role played by music in this encounter. By considering various composers, especially focusing on Gwen Howell, the paper argued that "musicalizing" the Sino-British encounter can reveal crucial insights for historical analysis. Incorporating questions of gender, music, sound, and identity, he revealed how migrants used music to negotiate their new surroundings and connect with home in colonial contexts.

In the third panel, Devon Borowski explored the legacy of Anglo-Jewish musician Isaac Nathan (1790–1864). While Nathan has been mostly studied with a focus on his Jewish identity, Borowski highlighted his training in the Italian *bel canto* school and the connected altering of the practice

of song – a second foreign lineage he acquired through his studies. Borowski modified the decolonial notion of “border thought” to frame Nathan’s praxis in post-Enlightenment Britain as “border song.” In so doing, Borowski argued that Nathan adopted “border singing” as a response to the marginalization of Jewish vocal practices as anti-modern and anti-Western, given the association of Jews and Jewish voices with the “Orient.” The second talk of the panel was delivered by Elizabeth Rouget. Rouget explored the success of the French *opéra comique* in eighteenth-century New Orleans. This genre flourished in the “Paris of the American South” because of the influx of French performers from Saint-Domingue who sought refuge in North America after the French and Haitian revolutions. Against the backdrop of the history of the city in the eighteenth century, with its mixture of European powers and influences, Rouget explored the migration of actors, dancers, and musicians who were originally trained in Paris and the popularity of opera theatre companies in New Orleans as a result. Based on records of these performances, she argued that the *opéra-comique* genre reinforced the sense of French identity in New Orleans.

In the fourth panel of the day, Janie Cole spoke on the topic of music, migration, and religion in eighteenth century West Central Africa. In her talk, she analyzed missionaries’ compendia – a unique body of knowledge produced between 1650 and 1750 as a result of the migration of Italian Capuchin Franciscan missionaries to West Central Africa. Cole utilized images and descriptions from these sources to shed light on knowledge about and understanding of musical practices. She argued that the representations of music in these sources, both in visual and textual forms, functioned as a vehicle to carry and develop knowledge in migration about eighteenth-century African kingdoms in which music played a critical part in the articulation of local political power, identity, symbolism, and ritual.

The second day of the symposium began with the fifth panel which discussed the perception of music as foreign or even a threat in two different scenarios. Molly Barnes, the first speaker, explored the ambivalent American encounter with German immigrant musicians before the Civil War. In the context of massive German immigration into the United States, Barnes highlighted the musical knowledge, attitudes, and pedagogies the immigrants brought with them and put to use by establishing orchestras and other musical practices of their homeland in the United States. As Barnes argued, there was a general admiration by native-born Americans for German musicians. Based on an analysis of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals of the antebellum era, Barnes argued that these sources reveal at once respect for the German musical tradition and an instinctive distrust of the newcomers' foreignness. The second speaker, Giuseppe Gerbino, was concerned with the arrival of Italian opera in New York in 1825 and 1826. In his talk, Gerbino discussed the nexus of opera, migration, and historical knowledge against the background of European musicians' migration to the United States and the ambivalent perception of the musical tradition they brought with them. At the center of Gerbino's talk was an analysis of an 1833 polemic printed in an issue of the *North American Magazine*. He pointed out that this musical controversy turned the sound of foreign singers into a crisis of cultural identity. As he further argued, the question of the financial success or failure of the first season of Italian opera became the testing ground for competing narratives about the English foundation of American musical culture.

Following this final panel, the keynote of the conference was delivered by Kate van Orden on "Mapping Music and Migration: Questions of Scale." In her talk, van Orden discussed global music history and argued that it can be utilized to both interrogate and challenge the lens of Eurocentric histories of music and develop new methodologies to better

address the meaningfulness of music and migration. She began by outlining the analytic categories used in migration studies and how they can be used by music historians. Musicians, as van Orden pointed out, have always been a mobile group. In this context, she discussed different types of migration and mobility such as chain migration, as well as the question of policing of borders and citizenship, the concept of diaspora, the relationship to the real or imagined homeland, and self-awareness and identities of the migrants. Van Orden went on to discuss matters of scale in the field, such as the relationship between micro- and macrohistory in musicological research. Here, van Orden discussed current research on macro-scale history and global microhistory, such as macro-historical processes in human musicking. Suggesting a play of scales between micro and macro, van Orden argued for a global microhistory: local, contextual, and based on primary sources.

In the final discussion, co-convenor Tina Frühauf with conference participants Janie Cole, Nancy Rao, and Elizabeth Rouget discussed broader questions in the context of the symposium such as: What kind of global systems of knowledge does migration produce? What do music and migration teach us about borders? A crucial component in this discussion were the questions of representation and absence. As Cole pointed out, in discussions of global knowledge of migration, Sub-Saharan Africa is often neglected, even though the African continent is deeply affected by migration and despite the significance of African diasporas. Despite new research in the field, stereotypes of Africa as a continent without writing continue to exist in academic discourse. In her remarks, Rouget highlighted the need to give voice to Indigenous people absent in archives. She broached both the need for their representation in scholarly works as well as the challenges in so doing, especially given the fact that researchers rely on written accounts and scores, but most indigenous music is preserved only in oral form. Finally,

Rao emphasized the need not to look at music as static but as a mobile element that connects people in multifold ways – how people connect to what they see on stage, for example, can reveal the listening practices of common people. Tina Frühauf, in conclusion, pointed out the manifold and diverse ways of studying music and argued for the use of diverse methodologies, objects, and sources beyond Eurocentric thinking.

The symposium assembled scholars from different disciplines and countries who engaged with the theme of music and migration from different perspectives (voice, sound, instruments, songs and singing, text, dance, performances), in different contexts, and with different categories (e.g., race, colonialism, gender), making clear that exploring the music-migration-nexus makes crucial contributions to the fields of both history and music and opens new perspectives for future research.

Viola Alianov-Rautenberg
GHI Washington Pacific Office