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# Introduction by the Guest Editors: Global Music History in the Classroom: Reflections on Concepts and Practice

HYUN KYONG HANNAH CHANG, DANIEL F. CASTRO PANTOJA, AND HEDY LAW

In the last decade, more scholars across music studies have drawn attention to the separation of the disciplinary terrain into musicology and ethnomusicology and its implications. They have pointed out that neither the insular framework of Western-centered musicology nor the framework of world music or area-based studies associated with ethnomusicology is a suitable basis for generating meaningful or democratic narratives about music in the past and the present.<sup>1</sup> Scholarly networks coalescing under the banner of global music history have constituted one (inter)disciplinary space actively nurturing and addressing this criticism. While global music history cannot be reduced to a single genealogy, objective, or motivation, it seems fair to note some shared visions among scholars identifying with the new field. These visions include: examining musical connections of the distant and recent past at different geographic scales that have been obscured or made invisible; developing new comparative approaches; and conducting historical analyses of musics that were traditionally not treated as objects of historical inquiry. This is not to say that scholarship committed to such objectives did not exist before the emergence of global music history as a field. Global music history certainly intersects and resonates with prior scholarships (and by extension, pedagogies) across musicology and ethnomusicology that have adopted or experimented with approaches that chafe at inherited disciplinary frameworks, including

1. See, for example, Olivia A. Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–32; Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1–14; Jesús A. Ramos-Kittrell, “Teaching Music and Difference: Music, Culture, and Difference in Globalization,” *AMS Musicology Now*, July 10, 2018; Gavin S. K. Lee, “At Home at Disciplinary Margins: Reflections of an Ethno/Musicologist from Elsewhere,” *Sounding Board, Ethnomusicology Review*, March 4, 2018.

nationalist historiography, ethnography-centered presentism, or ideas about cross-cultural comparativism.

Even if there is no broad consensus on what global music history comprises, what it should be, and where its boundaries lie, the recognition of global music history as an emerging field (or subfield) within Anglophone music studies (and beyond) is attested by recent conferences, society study groups, and research projects.<sup>2</sup> The American Musicological Society (AMS) Global Music History Study Group was founded in 2019. In the same year, the Global History of Music Study Group of the International Musicological Society (IMS) met for the first time in Paris. Global music history has also garnered attention in some quarters of ethnomusicology. Some of the most active participants and interlocutors in global music history have indeed been ethnomusicologists. Although not known primarily as a field for historical inquiry, ethnomusicology has had a longstanding commitment to a global scope in its outlook and organization, and historical studies have been an enduring subfield within it, as demonstrated by, for example, the Society for Ethnomusicology's (SEM) Historical Ethnomusicology Section.<sup>3</sup> Music theorists have also organized workshops, conference panels, and roundtables exploring comparative approaches in recent years, often under the rubric of the global.

The increasing interest in “global” research—in terms of object or perspective, or both—raises new questions about what we teach in different music and music studies courses. It is unlikely that we will create a more-or-less uniform pedagogical canon for global music history, and it is a wrongheaded idea to attempt such a thing. Yet, considering the growing recognition of global music history as a field, we, as co-chairs of the AMS Global Music History Study Group, felt that the time was ripe to take stock of how global perspectives are influencing teaching and were inspired to solicit pedagogues at the forefront of this emerging field to contribute to this special issue, “Teaching Global Music History: Practices and Challenges.” We hoped to trace what scholars thinking about this emergent field do in their classrooms, how they operate as teachers by applying specific themes to their teaching practices, what challenges they have encountered, and what provisional solutions they have provided. The articles collected in this special issue shed light on their experiences and perspectives on teaching in this developing area, whether they teach a course that is explicitly called “global music history” or is a close variation of it, or one that

2. See Makoto Takao, “Global Music History,” *Oxford Bibliographies in Music*, accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824-0317.xml>.

3. Consider, for example, the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM)'s mission statement: “Founded in 1955, the Society for Ethnomusicology is a global, interdisciplinary network of individuals and institutions engaged in the study of music across all cultural contexts and historical periods,” <https://www.ethnomusicology.org/>, accessed July 16, 2022.

integrates elements related to the global. They discuss not only design, methods, and contents, but also—and crucially—candid reflections upon challenges and failures and, in several cases, reservations about using the framework of “global music history” or the word “global.”

We recognize that our understanding of what is global is contingent on one's lived experiences as a person and scholar: it is conditioned by where we come from, the social experiences and encounters resulting from our backgrounds, the kinds of training we have received, and where we teach. Critical contextual factors that shape the teaching of global music history include forms of globality that characterize our universities, especially student demographics; the limitations and opportunities of the degree programs in which we teach and sometimes have a hand in shaping; mandates from the federal government or official accreditation agencies; and the specific nature of the institutional commitment to globalization. Since context-driven factors inform teaching, we have asked all the contributors to address their positionality and institutional context explicitly, rather than assuming unrealistically that these have little bearing on their teaching.

We also asked each contributor to share a pedagogical tool—a course syllabus, a primary source, a reading, an assignment, a field trip activity, a link to a performance or a recording, or an image of an object, if available—with the hope that this issue would serve as a pragmatic guide or offer valuable examples for those trying to design a teaching module or an activity on global music history. We anticipate that this practical approach might be of use to advanced graduate students, those on the job market who may need to design a new course on global music history for job applications, faculty members curious about creating a new class in this area, or members of curriculum committees at the departmental or university level wishing to have documented models or references on global music history for various curriculum renewal initiatives.

Yet, this special issue offers much more than a collection of teaching tools, vital as they are for instructors or administrators who may have limited open-access teaching resources in a fledgling subfield in one location. Readers will also find the contributors grappling with critical theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding the field of global music history. The contributors ask questions such as: What does it mean to teach global music history in the 2020s? What conceptual and practical factors should we consider if we want to bring global music history into the classroom? How do we teach a topic in this rapidly expanding area so that our students can see its relevance to their lives? How do we understand the “global” relative to the existing music curriculum in our respective departments and our institutions' strategic plans? How do the complicated disciplinary histories of music studies fields (including musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory) shape our understandings of the “global?”

The essays in this special issue contemplate these questions and, in the process, clarify concepts and issues related to this emerging field.

Inspired by Chantal Mouffe's critique of cosmopolitanism, we hope that this special issue works toward establishing a multipolar global music history pedagogy in which no single perspective can instantiate the meaning of "the global" or "the world."<sup>4</sup> This is a task done by embracing an agonistic model that welcomes pedagogical practices that do not shy away from conflict and contestation when it comes to thinking democratically about global spaces, and which considers multiple agonistic regional poles (as opposed to one center) and the agency of a plurality of actors, institutions, and events in the making of a global consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, those interested in teaching global music history should expect to engage with a plurality of meanings that scholars and historical actors have attached to the term "global," and which might be at odds with each other. The contributors indeed model the plurality that is necessarily a component of global music history. They make explicit how they conceptualize and mold global music history for the classroom, and how their teaching is shaped by the institutional and political contexts they inhabit, as well as their personal and professional experiences.

There are, nonetheless, connecting threads found across articles, which is why we have organized these articles into four parts, even if the arguments presented within each part sometimes clash. The first part, "Putting Together Global Music History Courses," consists of two articles that reflect on music history courses that explicitly address globality as their main subject. In her article Danielle Fosler-Lussier discusses how she has used threshold concepts (or, in her words, "interpretive approaches that define a discipline") to structure her course "Music on the Move in a Globalized World" around key concerns associated with global music history. She shows how her open-access, classroom-friendly book *Music on the Move* deploys these concepts to teach a systematic and empathetic perspective on music, which ultimately encourages students to understand diverse people and processes they encounter in their lives. Roe-Min Kok's article focuses on her interdisciplinary course "Music and Colonialism in Global History," offered at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and directed at both music and arts students. In addition to describing how this course uses a global framework to explore the impact of Western art music on former colonies, Kok's article revolves around her students' experiences and observations of the course, its effectiveness, and areas for improvement.

4. Chantal Mouffe, "Which World Order: Cosmopolitan or Multipolar?" *Ethical Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (December 2008): 453–67. See also Tamara Caraus, "Towards an Agonistic Cosmopolitanism: Exploring the Cosmopolitan Potential of Chantal Mouffe's Agonism," *Critical Horizons* 17, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 94–109.

5. See Roland Robertson, "Global Connectivity and Global Consciousness," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 10 (2011): 1336–45.

The second part, "Experimenting with Global Music History in Pedagogy," consists of three articles that are focused on concrete pedagogical approaches or methods. They allow the readers to imagine what a global music history pedagogy might look like in the classroom. Reflecting on her "Cantonese Music" course at the University of British Columbia in Canada, Hedy Law describes how teaching Cantonese music to an Asian-dominated student body in Vancouver decenters Eurocentric epistemologies entrenched in Western art music. Her experience invites us to consider the wider global Sinophone sphere and the distinct geopolitics that have traversed different periods, including those that pertain to the Hong Kong diaspora in recent years. In her article Alecia Barbour discusses how she incorporates concepts from the developing scholarship of global music history into the general education music course that she teaches as the only full-time music faculty at an institute of technology, and as a scholar identifying with historical ethnomusicology. She describes how embracing Michael Dylan Foster's concept of defamiliarization has helped to broaden the non-major students' perspectives on seemingly local music cultures and the notion of music itself. This part of the issue concludes with Nancy Rao's article on the importance of developing archival approaches and perspectives that could have democratizing implications for the research and teaching of global music history. Rao's work suggests that the politics of the traditional music archive necessitate broader considerations of what might serve as evidence when conducting global music research. Rao's reflections are based on a workshop on archival objects related to Chinese theaters and the life of Chinese Americans in early twentieth-century America that she conducted at the University of British Columbia and her research for the book *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America*. Her article suggests how bringing students to the archives, showing them objects directly related to narratives that shape our understanding of the globality of the past, and asking them to examine the materiality of these objects can help them understand historically peripheralized communities that should nevertheless be included in the scope of global music history today.

The third part, "Words of Caution," warns against facile or celebratory applications of global music history in teaching. In her article Tamara Levitz critiques the treatment of global music history as a "heuristic, concept, method, or pedagogical approach," positioning it instead as "a decentering perspective." Her argument cites the difficulty of having a shared concept of the world within musicology and unpacks this limitation through a genealogical comparison of comparative literature and musicology. She then uses Shu-mei Shih's idea of relational comparison to outline pedagogical ideas that could be applied to music or music history courses, in place of using "global music history" as a framework.

The final part of this special issue includes two conversations on the practices, challenges, failures, and potential perils of teaching from the perspectives of global music history, bringing together themes that have appeared in all of the articles above. The first conversation is between Samuel Ajose, who teaches at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and Michael Birenbaum Quintero, who teaches at Boston University, United States. Readers will appreciate how “global” and “global music history” are parsed by the interlocutors, who inhabit different institutional and regional contexts as ethnomusicologists and teachers. Ajose and Birenbaum Quintero discuss how they apply global and historical dimensions to teaching in their respective positions and how they have come to include community music-making outside the university to fulfil their pedagogical commitment. The issue concludes with a conversation between Olivia Bloechl and Bonnie Gordon. Bloechl addresses her “Introduction to Global Music History” undergraduate course, while Gordon speaks of global moments and frameworks that inform how she teaches the early music courses that she offers at her institution. They discuss the usefulness of a global frame in challenging assumptions of local or national history and the Eurocentric narratives that have long shaped music history survey courses while noting that the term “global” itself might be intimidating for some students. They also offer pragmatic advice on selecting the teaching documents and delimiting the scope of the course based on their experience of what has and what has not worked in the past.

In conclusion, we as editors notice a pattern across this special issue: the instructors’ embrace of (and reservations about) global music history as a method, orientation, or idea often stems from an ethical intention. The authors’ goal is to make their classes and course materials more inclusive and to increase their students’ critical awareness of their place in an interconnected world. This goal is usually aligned with some stated institutionalized commitments typical of many universities in the Global North. (We note, however, that the instructors’ ethically informed course objectives may clash with institutional strategies around student recruitment—a point raised by Levitz, Birenbaum Quintero, and Gordon). Courses committed to the ethical inclusivity of diverse musical practices and histories may call attention to previously invisibilized musical interconnections and exchanges across national and cultural divides. They may also examine music in the context of regional or interregional conflicts and conquests, which may help students understand how musical and sonic cultures were influenced by colonialism and its legacy in different locations.

However, as much as we recognize or celebrate the ethical objective that grounds these courses, we also caution that the conception of “globality” is always contingent, contextual, plural, and contested. This provisional understanding of the “global” is attested by a broad spectrum of pedagogical approaches for

the music history classroom, including the pointed critiques of what constitutes the “global” in global music history, for whom, and to what ends. Critiques are, of course, predictable in scholarly discourse. Less predictable from our view as editors is the contributors’ repeated emphasis on the student demographics that shape the global music history classroom, existing institutional or curricular structures, and the history of the place where the university is embedded. In other words, the effectiveness of global music history pedagogy is more context-driven than we thought. The external, environmental factors—as opposed to internal ones such as readings, assignments, or course materials—often emerge as conclusive criteria for successful global music history pedagogy. The practices and challenges discussed in these essays thus illuminate one point: contrary to most Western art music courses that might work across various teaching settings, global music history courses paradoxically demand instructors to localize them. These courses tend to work better when instructors are attuned to the opportunities and gaps that arise from the various student communities and institutional initiatives that shape a university.

The essays in this special issue demonstrate a diversity of current pedagogical perspectives on and around the emerging field of global music history. We hope that the various experiences and tools presented here will serve as resources for readers who wish to construct new courses or revise existing ones specific to their teaching context. We hope that this collection of articles stimulates constructive conversations on what the pedagogy of global music history might entail and why some of us want to teach it, especially when we want to explore alongside our students and colleagues what it means to study music in a global world, then and now, here or elsewhere.