

Academic Labor and Music Curricula

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In this paper we parse recent initiatives rethinking music curricula—in particular, those critiquing the enduring centrality of the Western art music canon—in connection to questions of academic labor and service. Many of our interlocutors ask us: “Why are conservative curricula a problem now?” The short answer is that canon-driven music curricula have always been problematic, as reflected by historical initiatives for curricular reform. However, even if the present moment in US music departments is far from unique, it does stand out in particular institutional and disciplinary ways that offer new insights into how curricular design operates and resists change. Specifically, we argue that when it comes to matters of curricular design, students of music would merit from departments thinking differently about structures of labor and academic seniority.

As we discuss, contingent faculty have recently become the majority of teaching staff in higher education. Even though this labor force has a much higher representation of minority and women scholars than tenured faculty, their control over curricula is minimal. While many of these scholars channel their desire for change into public-oriented initiatives and other forms of curriculum-adjacent academic service, this work is less valued than research and teaching, and thus contributes to a self-sustaining cycle of exclusion. Intimately entwined with the histories of music disciplines, the canon remains obstinate. In response to calls for reform, it is typically only adjusted by placing similar texts and objects in play (Natvig 2002, xi) or by mobilizing the language of “diversity” to justify and nominally amend a canon-driven curriculum. From our own positions as contingent faculty, we thus argue that the relative invisibility of academic service is a curricular issue in its own right.

Aside from this shifting, increasingly vocal, but still largely disempowered labor force, the current political moment also animates the long and tense relationship between the humanities and social movements. Since at least the presidential campaigns of 2016 that polarized the country on the issue of immigration, if not the Black Lives Matter movement (2013–) that shone a light on the deadly repercussions of systemic racism, there has been increased pressure on academia to recognize its complicity in imperial, colonial, racist, sexist, and classist social formations, as current social movements influence initiatives variously calling for critical teaching, diversity, and decolonization. We propose that music departments

recognize the performative properties of curricula, and we suggest entry points to redressing the influence of coloniality and empire that undergird the institutionalization of music.

Contingent Faculty and Academic Service

We write as colleagues and friends, a graduate student instructor trained as an ethnomusicologist and a lecturer trained as a musicologist, both in the early stages of our academic careers, both committed to thinking about, and valuing, our work as teachers as much as our work as researchers. While we hail from international backgrounds (from Honduras and the Czech Republic), the conversation we present is US-centric: we work at institutions based in the United States, and notice that US institutions of higher education have given particularly short shrift to their country's multicultural musical heritage (Moore 2017, 4).¹ Our contribution to this volume is distinctly shaped by our positions and experiences as different from those of faculty on and beyond the tenure track. This article stems from previous collaborative work on matters of curricula, including an all-Columbia-contingent-faculty panel titled *The Music Survey at the (Post) Global University* (Vágnerová et al. 2018). Questions about “intergenerational dialogue,” as well as the panelists’ relative juniority, came up in the Q&A and in discussions before and after the panel, informing our thinking towards this paper. We underline the importance of dialogue with our senior colleagues across the academy: after all, questions of curricula stand metonymically for entire departments. That is, they pertain to all areas of a music department (e.g. historical musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, composition, performance, music education) and personnel (e.g. tenured and tenure-track faculty, faculty who only teach elective courses, contingent faculty, postdoctoral fellows and visiting scholars, administrative and support staff, and graduate and undergraduate students). In spite of these broad ramifications of curricula, and even though contingent faculty have done the majority of teaching at all types of institutions of higher education since at least 2013 (Hurlburt 2017; Birmingham 2017), curricular decisions are still typically only made by tenured and tenure-track faculty (Thurman and Turner 2017). How can we think about these disjunctures in a generative way? What effects do they have on the curricula in question (and by extension on our students)? And what do they tell us about the relationships among labor structures, pedagogy, curricula, and the canon at this moment in the humanities?

Academic labor is typically divided into research, teaching, and service, “the trinity of promotion and tenure criteria” (Massé and Hogan 2010; see also Mountz et al. 2015). In the political economy of academic

labor, these three categories are not on equal footing, however: the undervaluing, gendering, and invisibility of academic service is well documented (Massé and Hogan 2010, 18; see also Ahmed 2006; Sterne 2011; Guarino and Borden 2017). Granted, service is difficult to define with specificity: it “is rarely tabulated or analyzed” and can include activities as diverse as mentoring and advising students, serving on committees and task forces, writing recommendation letters, and so forth (Massé and Hogan 2010, 1). Even when items of service are explicitly listed, such as on a *curriculum vitae* submitted towards an academic position, service always comes last, after research and teaching in either order. Meanwhile, recent studies aiming to explain the “leaky pipeline” of promotion of women and faculty of color have determined that “faculty of color, queer faculty, and faculty of working class backgrounds [are] especially saddled with invisible service work” (University of Oregon 2017, 228) and that “women faculty perform significantly more service than men, controlling for rank, race/ethnicity, and field or department” (Guarino and Borden 2017, 1). The invisibility of academic service and this gendered, racialized, and classed seniority gap produce and exacerbate one another and determine whose curricular work has impact.

Because of the exclusive terms of access to curricular design, much critical work takes place outside of official committees and *curricula vitae*—in staff meetings of instructors, informal meetings, email chains, and online collaborative platforms of contingent faculty navigating how to responsibly and critically teach the material they are tasked with imparting. And again, as the above studies bear out, contingent faculty do this from subject positions that are, in the aggregate, more diverse than those of tenured faculty, and thus at a remove from subjectivities represented in the very curricula they teach.² Invisible forms of academic service, sometimes culminating in calls for curricular change, also frequently take shape through interactions among graduate student instructors and teaching assistants across departments and universities: friendships from cross-disciplinary seminars, graduate student conferences, and graduate student workers’ picket lines provide a context for discussing what we are asked to teach, how it compares to the other disciplines, and how we might envision changes.³

In music departments, maintaining long-standing curricular structures that favor one particular history—that of the white and male West—at the expense of other histories perpetuates the idea that any subjectivities (e.g. women, people of color, genderqueer persons) and approaches to music, sound, and listening that diverge from the master narrative of the Western art canon are peripheral and thus dispensable. Questioning

music curricula, it follows, calls into question the very same entrenched hierarchies that perpetuate labor inequities along the lines of gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality. When curricula are treated as default structural arrangements that simply are, any work on revising them can strategically be perceived as unwelcome and “unproductive” (both in the colloquial and the Marxist sense). And yet, keeping curricula current is arguably an especially productive form of service central to the everyday operations of music departments, as courses mandatory for undergraduates guarantee much departmental funding and contribute greatly to the academic and public tenor and image of the department.

Disciplinary, Pedagogy, and Curricula

The present moment is not an exceptional one in terms of demands and calls for curricular revision. Rather, it is but one iteration within a longer history of changes and initiatives taking up the question of what we should be teaching, why, and how. Although our disciplines have changed dramatically throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, music curricula continue to express old conventional wisdoms of what is considered common knowledge in the humanities and social sciences (Natvig 2002, x–xii). Of course, “conventional wisdom[s]” as Susan McClary writes, are only the effects of “shared procedures” of knowledge production, and tend to portend a “rude reversal, whereby something that seemed to have possessed truth-value gets relegated to the scrap heap of superseded misconceptions” (2000, 5). To understand what the “reversals” of canon-based music curricula might look like, we must first unpack the “shared procedures” of our disciplines and their institutionalization, and question the terms of access to *sharing in* the knowledge production that establishes curricular convention.

Two of the central projects of post-war historical musicology, the largest of the music disciplines, were deeply uncritical at first: to produce authoritative editions of musical works deemed important and to write detailed histories of the contexts from which this music arose.⁴ The scope of musicological scholarship, privileging the music of European and to some extent US-American white men, was meanwhile distinctly shaped by the contexts from which the discipline arose. These contexts include silencing, such as the gender panic of the men of the New York Musicological Society who in 1930 closed the door on Ruth Crawford in order “to avoid the incipient criticism that musicology was ‘women’s work’” (Hisama 2001, 18; Cusick 2011, 471–72), as well as the simple blanket non-admittance of women to Columbia College before 1983. It was only in the 1980s that the discipline saw a new wave of critical thinking about music (e.g. Kerman

1985; McClary and Leppert 1987), and only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that it saw a flurry of analyses of gender and sexuality in music (Tick and Bowers 1986; Clemént 1988; McClary 1991; Citron 1993; Solie 1993; Cook and Tsou, 1994), though similar work did take place earlier outside of musicology proper (McClary 1990). Even so, most of this new feminist scholarship still dealt with canonical music and the depictions, lives, and works of white cisgender women.

One of the disciplinary lineages of ethnomusicology goes back to comparative musicology, with its inseparability from histories of colonialism (Agnew 2005), to a negation of the Western art canon that also prominently denied the adequacy of popular music as an object of study (e.g. Kunst 1950; Hood 1971), and to an emphasis on an unchanging “traditionality” that denied certain populations participation in modernity (McAllester 1979). Although for some ethnomusicology has absorbed influence from intellectual movements in the social sciences at a faster rate than musicology and music theory (e.g. Cook 1998, 99), others have pointed out that it suffers from its own “canonical obstinacy”: that is, in spite of emerging to a great extent in opposition to historical musicology’s obsession with the Western art canon, ethnomusicology countered by creating its own canon of sorts (Danielson 2007). That ethnomusicology emerged concomitantly with the rise of audio technologies and in the service of colonialist projects, and later thrived in symbiosis with a market for World Music, also makes for a troubling history of profit from seldom-compensated subaltern labor (Feld 2000). The stakes of rethinking music curricula always necessarily pivot around these and other elements of our disciplinary histories: in deciding what we teach and how, curricular committees act as a jury evaluating not only the musical material on the table, but also how that material came to be on the table, who built the table, who is sitting at the table, and who is outside the door.⁵

Until recently, the desire to change the intellectual and social culture of music classrooms has largely been understood as a matter of pedagogy rather than curricular design. Although pedagogy and curricular design overlap, pedagogy focuses on the methodology of teaching whereas curricular design audits the very catalogue of texts, materials, and content introduced in individual courses, majors, and departments. Addressing questions of pedagogy in isolation thus merely skims the surface while leaving intact the systemic criteria that uphold one particular corpus of knowledge. For example, even though many contributions to *Teaching Music History* (2002, ed. Mary Natvig) critique the concept of the canon, essays on “Women in Music” (Natvig), “Film Music” (Pisani), and “American Music” (Cook) nevertheless appear under a section titled Topics Courses,

signaling that these subjects are to be explored electively, and not within a mandatory curriculum. Another essay collection, *Vitalizing Music History Teaching* (2010, ed. James R. Briscoe) also largely focuses on *pedagogical* strategies from musicology and ethnomusicology, though Susan Cook's explicit critique of survey courses stands out. Then there is *The Music History Classroom* (2016, ed. James A. Davis), which opens with Susan McClary's declaration in the foreword that "the music history survey will continue to matter as long as we can make it relevant to the musicians of today and tomorrow" (xix). The essay collection that follows again mostly addresses hands-on pedagogical strategies, such as bringing *Mozartkugeln*, Eggs Berlioz, and other "music-themed food" into the classroom (Natvig 2002, 28). For all these texts' valuable contributions to discussions on music pedagogy, they largely inherit the assumption—indeed, the conventional wisdom—that only the West (often narrowly understood as Europe and the United States) "has" the titular "Music History." A broad survey of instructors of Music History courses for music majors in 2011–2012 confirms that over a decade into the new millennium teachers still prioritize teaching "the basic chronology of western art music" over cultural context, the lives of composers, non-Western music, musical instruments, Western popular music, and performers (Baumer 2015, 40). That is, the construction of the canon does not merely happen to be central to most music curricula, it is the justification for having a set curriculum to begin with. The problematic assumptions that confer the West's exclusive possession of (music) history, we argue, foreclose a more critically articulated engagement with histories of sound, music, and listening. Why only study the West? Why only through the prism of the canon?

In contrast to this recent work on pedagogy, the last few years see the institutionalized debate turn more explicitly towards curricular change. The 2014 meeting of the American Musicological Society hosted a roundtable titled "The End of the Undergraduate Music History Sequence?" with J. Peter Burkholder, Don Gibson, and Melanie Lowe, though also with the non-committal punctuation in the panel title. A different panel at the same meeting asked "What Do We Want Them To Know? Teaching 'Introduction to Musicology' in a Changing Field," with Charles M. Atkinson, Suzanne Cusick, Judith Peraino, and Richard Taruskin. The 2015 meeting of the AMS saw a panel on "Strategies and Opportunities for Greater Inclusion of Ibero-American Music in the Curriculum," with Walter Clark, Ana Alonso-Minutti, Drew Edward Davies, Jacqueline Avila, and Alejandro L. Madrid. Two of these panels were published in abridged form in the *The Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, published by the Pedagogy Study Group of the AMS, which has itself become a vital platform of discussing curricular

interventions. A conference titled *The Idea of Canon in the Twenty-First Century* met in September 2018 at Smith College, and a pre-conference symposium titled “Decolonizing Strategies in Ethnomusicology, Teaching, and Performance: Perspectives from the U.S. Southwest and Latin America” was held at the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology conference at the University of New Mexico.⁶ Publications like *College Music Curricula for a New Century* (ed. Moore 2017) offer arguments for centering “commitment to social justice” among the goals of performance degree curricula (Moore 2017, 16–17; Bradley 2017). We add our voices to this growing corpus of work that seeks to move questions of pedagogy into questions of curricula, which, we maintain, are also questions of academic labor.

The Canon and its Alternatives

That the musical canon is smaller and narrower in just about every way (geography, gender, race and ethnicity, class) than the canons of other disciplines in the humanities may have lulled us into believing that “covering” the canon *completes* something that might pass for music education. However, as reflected by many of the recent curricular changes that involve destabilizing the prominence of the Western canon and historical musicology in favor of a more interdisciplinary music education rooted in the humanities (Campbell, Myers, and Sarath 2014; Myers 2016), it is becoming patently clear that “coverage cannot be the goal,” as Anne Shreffler put it in reference to recent curricular changes at Harvard (Robin 2017; see also Lowe 2015, 65). Harvard brought new flexibility to majoring in music by eliminating the requirement to take classes in music theory and replacing the traditional “sequence”—a universalizing and troublingly teleological approach referring to the history of European music patronized by the church, the court, and the university from the Middle Ages to the recent past—with courses titled *Thinking about Music and Critical Listening* (Hovis 2016; Robin 2017). Similar changes at Cornell involved deprivileging notated music and instead, for instance, valorizing the study and practice of improvisation (Hovis 2016). A new curriculum at Vanderbilt University now opens with courses titled *Music as Global Culture*, which explores indigenous and Western art traditions, and *Music in Western Culture*, a topically organized writing seminar. Only *Music of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* is taught chronologically. The broad aim of the curriculum is to hone transferable skills both in the sense of preparing students for the job market and in the sense of preparing students for music that has not been written yet (Lowe 2015, 66–68). Perhaps most recently, Yale’s music majors no longer have to take sixteen required courses but only twelve, which are to be chosen flexibly from offerings

under four areas of musical study: music theory and technology, creative practice, Western art music, and non-Western art, popular, and vernacular musics (Turner 2018). Ripple effects among institutions are palpable here, but what is perhaps most important is that the resulting music curricula not only step away from the canon but also differ from one another significantly more than they used to, valuably pluralizing the “shared procedures” of music studies.

Another key goal of the above curricular revisions is to open up the music major to students interested in popular music, which continues to be sidelined by the academy (see Covach 2015) but which has the potential to bring students of more diverse backgrounds to the table. Due to systemic inequalities, “minority” students are less likely to grow up with music lessons and music-oriented leisure activities that fit the conventions of “classical music” education (Shreffler in Robin 2017). This, however, does not mean that students from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds are not interested in majoring in music. Opening up the major to those interested in popular music, music production, or music of the global South—in short, to those who are interested in music beyond the “classical”—invites a more diverse set of scholars and perspectives to the table. This is not to say that students and scholars from historically disenfranchised populations do not or cannot engage the canon of Western art music. Rather, it is to question how a corpus emerges *as* canonical to begin with, and from which point of view.

Where one impulse of those seeking greater diversity in the canon has been to expand the catalogue of canonical objects, we are critical of tokenistic efforts to diversify music curricula—what Madrid calls “adding new spices to the dish we have” (2017, 126). Such an intervention only deflects from the reason the canon exists in the first place and camouflages the colonialist and imperialist foundations of music disciplines. Therefore, the question is not as simple as enriching the canon with a few guest stars from historiographical and geographical margins. As we see it, the greater issue at hand is that the canon models a rather limited approach to questions surrounding musical archives—that is, curated collections of sound, music, and the different histories that give shape to their attendant practices and modes of valuation. Our curricula are so inculcated with the work concept (Goehr 1992; Steingo 2014) that we seldom pay attention to practices, techniques, and other less text-like processes that make up musical culture. Walter Benjamin writes about the “prismatic fringes of a library”—the non-books, pamphlets, and family photo albums—that hold the potential to refract the very image of a master “catalogue,” which is to say any dominant narrative or organizing logic (1955, 66). Foregrounding

these less object-like “prismatic fringes” of music, we suggest, leads to a more radical decentering of the logic of the canon wholesale, and offers a clearer reflection of how music means and what it does in our lives. Ana María Ochoa Gautier, for example, writes about the impossibility of “packaging” the Latin American (post-)colonial (sonorous) archive: “the acoustic dimensions of the colonial and early postcolonial archive are not presented to us as discrete, transcribed works or as forms neatly packaged into identifiable genres. They are instead dispersed into different types of written inscriptions that transduce different audile techniques into specific legible sound objects of expressive culture” (2014, 3). Ochoa Gautier thus questions where one draws from in the construction of an archive, an operation that is always selective and a priori empowered. Her formulation also valuably signals to the labor required in “neatly packaging,” in bringing a vast array of practices and competing discourses into some sort of unificatory logic. As junior scholars we are particularly aware that our intellectual and institutional labor is “performative,” as Eduardo Herrera put it at a conference debating the canons of Experimental Music (2018). Happily, we may look to recent models studying how something as un-object-like as listening histories came to have an objectness—what Ahmed calls a “sensuous certainty” (2006, 41; Fantinato 2018). Thinking more critically about the academic labor that translates music into music curricula would up the contrast on what is included and what is left by the wayside in US higher education. Then we could proceed to teaching curricula that are, perhaps, less packaged, more multivocal, full of situated perspectives and points of audition, more attentive to a broader range of musical practices, and more different from institution to institution than they currently are. Such curricula would encourage instructors and students of diverse backgrounds to learn with their own and one another’s particular positioning in mind. Such curricula might be non-chronological, trans-historical, and taught “across borders,” while attending to the asymmetrical relationships underpinning the construction of various canons (Alonso-Minutti 2017, 107; Serrati 2017, 97).

Humanities and Social Movements

The canonical orientation of our disciplines makes us forget that the modern humanities have been and should continue to be influenced by social movements. The humanities study how we have documented our world and how we have reflected upon its logics and epistemologies. Their frameworks teach us that this world is malleable. Our point should not be to instill the “appreciation” of historical texts but to teach the intellectual skill to audit our present moment (our disciplines included) and the way it

structures our futures. In fact, the work of rethinking curricula is humanities work *par excellence*. Edward Said, in a series of lectures at Columbia at the millennium, names the project of the humanities as “the critical investigation of values, history, and freedom” (Said 2004, 14).⁷ He sees the modern humanities as shaped by Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, and coming of age with Levi-Strauss, Foucault, and Barthes—that is, thinkers who understand the documentation of our world as socially constituted, who came to prominence as analysts of systems of power in society and who were influenced by social movements. After all, Marx’s work on capitalism emerges out of proletarian revolts in Northern Europe in the so-called “hungry forties,” and Foucault’s theory of power is inspired by the student protests of spring 1968. Said’s own foundational work in postcolonial studies (driven by his own participation in the struggle for Palestinian justice) and the work of feminist theorists, queer theorists, and critical race theorists (fueled by the women’s movement, gay liberation, civil rights and black nationalist movements) have expanded upon the work of the humanities since at least 1970.

Like movements for intellectual and curricular change before them, current calls for reform are deeply indebted to a history of student protest and movements for civil rights, labor protections, and gender equity re-animated in their contemporary iterations (Black Lives Matter, No DAPL, No Ban No Wall, #MeToo, Time’s Up, Fight for \$15, the unionization of graduate student workers and contingent faculty, protests of hate speech on college campuses, and so on). These movements have emerged in response to the rise of right wing extremism and political conformity on the one hand, and the destructive effects of neoliberal political economy on the other. They have brought an intersectional ethos and language to address racism, sexism, and neocolonialism to the liberal mainstream, which prominently includes college campuses. In the classes the two of us teach—Music Humanities (short for Masterpieces of Western Music) and Asian Music Humanities at Columbia, and Diverse Worlds of Music at Montclair State University—we have noticed students’ increasing meta-reflection on the politics of music curricula, mobilizing the critical thinking skills they develop in and out of class to question the logics underpinning the courses themselves. This is evident, for example, in responses to a writing assignment that one of the authors of this article (Vágnerová) conducts during the very first session of “Masterpieces.” The response of Alejandro D. (they/them/their) in January 2018 reads: “What does it mean to take a course that is, in ideology, somewhat archaic in a time of increasingly intersectional approaches to exploring culture and society?” This is to say, the twenty-first century university does not have a patent on critical

thinking: the discourses and goals in the classroom intersect with those on social media, activist movements, and everyday life outside the walls of the university, often drawing on older academic ideas responding to issues of social justice decades ago (e.g. Kimberlé Crenshaw's [1989] concept of intersectionality, which has found its way into the mainstream in recent years and crops up in Alejandro D.'s question). Music departments teaching survey courses, appreciation courses, and entire curricula centered on the European canon—and, in fact, the humanities writ large—should be asking not only what it means to privilege the canon but also what it means to privilege it now, *in 2018*.

It is no coincidence that many of the recent demands for curricular change are published alongside calls for transforming the social atmosphere on campuses. For example, an anonymous letter detailing issues such as sexual harassment and discrimination in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Yale simultaneously indicted an outdated and nontransparent curriculum and tenure review process (Platoff 2015); a manifesto titled *The Demands* called out the academic *and* social values of no less than eighty American universities and colleges (TheDemands.org 2015); and calls for decolonizing curricula at American University came in response to a racist hate crime on its campus (Matlon 2017; Choutka et al. 2017).⁸ A number of extra-institutional, public-oriented “syllabi” (some of which border on curricula in their size) inspired by recent social movements and oriented towards the public also index a lacuna or, at best, a lag in the academic response to current issues. Examples include the Standing Rock Syllabus (Simpson et al. 2016), the Charleston Syllabus (Blain 2017; Williams, Williams, and Blain 2016), the Lemonade Syllabus (Benbow 2016), the Trump Syllabus 3.0 (Crawford and Wray 2017), the Diversity in Classical Music Syllabus (Thurman 2017), and activities such as The Music Privilege Walk (Leonard 2017) and the Columbia Tour of White Supremacy (Liberation Coalition 2018). To their readerships and audiences, these documents provide a catalogue of intellectual tools to understand current events that are studied in elective courses (if at all) ever-subject to waning trends in registration. And, predictably, much of this work reaching outside of the academy is done by faculty who are women and/or persons of color who perform this work even during periods when feminism and antiracism are not the tenor of the popular mainstream.

Our own work on these topics is most deeply indebted to the work of our advisors, who have long sought to reimagine music departments as more collaborative, equitable, and pluralist spaces. Ellie Hisama's instruction of a multidisciplinary graduate seminar titled *Feminist Pedagogy* at The Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality, her work

as Chair of the 2018 Humanities Equity Committee, and her directorship of a music workshop for young women of color from public high schools reflect a model of academic service work that rethinks what the humanities should “be like” from the perspective of gender, racial, and labor justice. Equally, Ana María Ochoa Gautier’s mentorship across various areas of the department, as well as through the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, in addition to her scholarship that critically engages the mutual constitution between Western discourses and colonial territories, carve out new intellectual, institutional, and social spaces for reenvisioning the study of sound and music. We contend that scholars of music should not shirk away from initiatives that originate in activist sentiment. To make this possible for untenured and contingent faculty and instructional staff, however, institutions need to recognize, address, and correct the collective implicit bias surrounding that very type of academic service, particularly curricular-like work oriented towards the public and work on institutional schemes that address inequity.

Diversity and Decolonizing

While some of the most radical calls for curricular change use the language of “decolonizing” (which we address below), much more common—and much more palatable to university administrations—are various “commitments” to “diversity,” “inclusion,” and “the global.” In addition, the embattled humanities, ever under suspicion for being useless, are under pressure to prepare students to meet the exigencies of the twenty-first century job market driven by the imperative of economic growth (Garvey 2015; *The Ends of the Humanities* 2017). This section parses the meanings and limits of the terms taken up by various initiatives at twenty-first century universities, particularly the language of “diversity” and “decolonization.”

Initiatives promoting diversity are rightly criticized for their surface strategies: “diversifying” often stops at students of color smiling in photographs on the cover of university brochures instead of impactful policy changes addressing issues disproportionately faced by this population (from being unrepresented in curricula, to being targets of hate speech on campus, to studying and teaching under financial duress). Who is diversity for? And, more specifically, what is the role of race, gender, sexuality, coloniality, and imperialism in imagining progress (Gilroy 1993, 72; Hisama 2018)? For music scholars, these questions should resonate with historical diversity-like initiatives like the time the US State Department paid Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and many other jazz musicians to perform “Cultural Diplomacy” abroad during the Cold War, while “the government continued to deny black Americans full citizenship at home” (Griffin 2004,

120; Von Eschen 2004; Davenport 2009, Monson 2007, Jankowski 2016; *Jazz Ambassadors*, Dir. Berkeley 2018). Critiques of diversity might also evoke the official pop anthem of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa),” which sees the White-presenting Colombian singer Shakira sampling and covering the 1986 hit “Zangaléwa” by the Golden Sounds, a Cameroonian makossa group, which assumes the function of a “souvenir” that “authenticates a tourist’s (or ethnographer’s) experience” (Hammond 2012, 41). Like “diversity,” “inclusion,” too, involves relationships of unequal power. The recent wave of attention to the life, vocal work, and protest music of gay African American composer and vocalist Julius Eastman (Clayton 2013–; Hisama 2015; Leach and Packer 2015; Ross 2017; The Otolith Group 2017; The Kitchen 2018; Savvy Contemporary 2018) should be understood both as long overdue and, as writer and filmmaker Kodwo Eshun put it, as “the new music world apologizing for its racism” to reform its own image dominated by “dead white men” (2018). As Brazilian scholar of coloniality and intersectional queerness Jota Mombaça notes, “the benevolent narratives of white alliances—formulas such as ‘giving space,’ ‘giving visibility,’ ‘giving voice,’ all predicated on the normative desire of adjusting the social world—have as a more evident limit their own incapability of incorporating the negative dimension of that work, that is, ‘losing space,’ ‘losing visibility,’ ‘losing voice’” (Mombaça 2017).⁹

The language of “decolonizing” is certainly not innocent either: the work of Mario Cancel-Bigay (2018), for example, interrogates the many valences of “the colonial,” problematizing the relationship between different lineages of postcolonial, decolonial, and settler colonial studies and thought (see also Ochoa Gautier 2014).¹⁰ As Cancel-Bigay argues, while decolonial studies are indebted to Latin American scholars and scholarship, the debate’s institutionalization in the Global North has “provincialized” other lineages of thought (see also Rivera Cusicanqui 2014). What we find valuable about the term “decolonization,” however, is that it helps us acknowledge that many music curricula are modeled on a value system and organization of the world that originated in European colonialism and imperialism.¹¹ What might it mean to “decolonize” music studies? To start, it means to accept that music education is not a neutral agent in music history and culture. We create meaning by directing our attention to some musics and not others, and in the process of continuously reinforcing one particular canon, hierarchies are enforced to the point of appearing default. Thus, music appreciation cannot be the goal, as that in itself mirrors a colonial ethos—think Jesuit missionaries teaching Baroque music to Indigenous Bolivians as a form of conversion (e.g. Castagna 1999; Rondón

1997; Waisman 2011). The ubiquitous imaginary of Greece as cradle of (Western) civilization is part and parcel of a logic that presumes that we must all be Western, or, at minimum, become “civilized” through becoming informed about “Western culture” through university-level humanities courses.¹² The notion of a well-rounded individual cultivated through an exclusive education selectively focused on Europe and the United States can easily coexist with diversity discourses, which are simply subsumed under its logic. The same cannot be said for decolonization.

In a decolonized music curriculum, the West would have to be approached as a construction: what “Western Culture” (and its music history) means has only been possible through imperial/colonial relations. To decolonize music studies means to question the origins of value systems that largely originate in and pertain to white European and North American culture, values, gaze, and listening; to understand musical cultures as having multiple and often contradictory histories; and to ultimately recognize that a well-rounded, responsible, and critical study of music requires the re-centering of “subaltern subjectivities” (Mombaça 2017). To be clear, a re-centering of the subaltern is a very different project than an inclusion of the Other, so often instrumentalized in the service of constructing the West. Even though music scholarship has recognized the global histories of violence that have made and make possible the very idea of “the West” (e.g. Ochoa Gautier 2014; Tsou 2014; Hisama 1993), music curricula do not reflect this vital insight, insofar as “Western” music courses remain at the center, and at best address colonial and imperial relations critically. More frequently, they obfuscate or take them for granted. As Mombaça (2017) puts it, “to envision [such a] repositioning of subaltern bodies, subjectivities, and lives outside of subalternity is a project that can only be undertaken insofar as privileged bodies, subjectivities, and lives are repositioned outside of dominance.” Decolonizing music studies, in other words, must involve the canon’s ceding of curricular territory—“losing space” (Mombaça 2017).



It is an obstinate but false corollary that the musical canon defines so many curricula because of its inherent greatness and power. Instead, conservative curricula are kept in place by insulating the growing pool of contingent labor from impactful curricular work. To be clear, it is often simply not possible for departments to obtain funding for tenure-track positions, but it is very much within their power to cede space at the table of curricular review to contingent faculty, and thus counteract the academy’s implicit devaluing of their service and public-oriented work. The politics of privi-

leging a canon-driven curriculum impact research, work environments, teaching, classroom politics, the allocation of space and funding, and most importantly the student bodies we teach. As Georgina Born and Kyle Devine write on the topic of gender inequities in the teaching and practice of electronic music, “the assemblage-like character of these relations means that real change can begin anywhere, and that critiques and initiatives introduced [in one place] have the potential to reverberate across all of the others” (2016, 8). For meaningful change to happen in the landscape of music curricula, however, the “anywhere” of curricular decision-making specifically needs to expand to include the academic service of minority scholars, women, and contingent faculty, academic work that is in dialogue with contemporary social movements, student viewpoints, and a critical engagement with decolonial frameworks.

Notes

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1. A more global view of the question of music curricula is thus outside the purview of this paper, though we hope our intervention can contribute to a broader international dialogue. For a recent contribution to this conversation from a Latin American perspective, see the special issue of *Revista Internacional de Educación Musical* edited by Favio Shifres and Guillermo Rosabal-Coto, “Hacia una educación musical decolonial en y desde Latinoamérica” (2017).
2. Even contingent faculty pools do not reflect the diversity of the country: for graduate students in musicology, the cost of instrumental lessons to acquire “keyboard skills” required by many graduate Music programs, or the expectation of passing a French and a German exam (as opposed to, say, Spanish or Hindi) are clear structural barriers. The pre-AMS/SMT symposium on Diversifying Music Academia: Strengthening the Pipeline (Project Spectrum 2018) is sure to speak to this topic.
3. A Yale student petition asking to “decolonize” the English major, for example, resonated with graduate student instructors at Columbia. The petition led to some restructuring of the Major, dethroning English poetry from its place of privilege in the curriculum, and bringing about new course offerings featuring writing traditions from around the globe, with a special look to the work of women and persons of color (Wang 2016; Philyaw 2016).
4. Music theory, historically the discipline’s closest relative, has often functioned as a technology of corroborating musicology’s claims, and similarly focuses largely on the European canon (for two recent critiques, see Hiser 2017; Gill 2017).
5. It is worth noting that curricular changes are not always the result of committee work

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but instead come out of particular contract negotiations or a specific departmental appointment. At UC Berkeley, for instance, when Olly Wilson was hired in 1970, “the faculty met his stipulation that half of his teaching would be devoted to African American music (and its African roots)”;

when Bonnie Wade was hired, also in 1970, she was tasked with single-handedly developing a full ethnomusicology curriculum of eleven courses (Bonnie Wade, personal communication). On tables as an entry point into questions of equality and labor, see Ahmed (2006).

6. While not exclusively about curricula, the Fall/Winter 2016 volume of *SEM Student News* is entitled “Decolonizing Ethnomusicology,” and includes discussions around student representation, the dominance of the English language in the discipline, ethnography and fieldwork, indigeneity, and archival repatriation, among others. Questions around academic labor are not discussed explicitly, though they are hinted at in various places, particularly in the perduring concerns around the centrality of the Western art canon. As one anonymous survey respondent put it, the stakes of “feel[ing] like the ‘ethno’ to someone [else]’s ‘musicology’” are high (8).

7. Edward Said taught literature and music in the Columbia Core Curriculum, which he often defended. In post-9/11 America, however, he identified a new need “to reconsider, reexamine, and reformulate the relevance of humanism” (Said 2004, 6).

8. During the editing of this article, the Columbia University campus experienced traumatic anti-Semitic and white supremacist hate acts. Both the Graduate Workers of Columbia (Solidarity Statement Against White Supremacy on Campus, 2018) and the Students of Color Alliance (SoCA Statement on Recent Acts of Racial Hostility on Columbia’s Campus, 2018) have condemned these acts, linking critiques of the pernicious effects of a Eurocentric curriculum to questions of labor.

9. Maria Fantinato (2018) valuably discusses these ideas in the context of contemporary politics in Brazil. At the same time as we question whom diversity really serves, valuable work is certainly being done under its banner, in part, we venture, because the language of decolonization and social justice simply doesn’t fly inside job letters, tenure folders, graduate student publications (hello!), and grant applications. Kira Thurman’s research, including her recent project *Diversity in Classical Music*, for example, spotlights marginalized figures in the Classical music world. By constructing a robust catalogue of exclusions in music history, Thurman documents the logics and processes that keep the canon going.

10. Ochoa Gautier points out that “the multiple temporal displacements of the Latin American debate as well as the diversity of positions in proposing decolonial politics throughout this long history, makes it difficult for scholars foreign to the region’s debates to recognize this long legacy on critical thinking on the colonial” (2014, 10).

11. Tamara Levitz’s ongoing project titled “Decolonizing the American Musicological Society” is a valuable critical historiography of these currents running through one of the most powerful academic institutions in music studies (see Levitz 2016).

12. Conventional wisdoms about the origins as well as geographical and historical limits of “Western culture” were valuably shown to be reductive by a recent exhibition titled *Music in Antiquity* at the CaixaForum Madrid (2018).

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