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Charles Darwin, Percy Grainger, and John Blacking: Reflections on the Historical Emergence of Music as a Human Universal

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Abstract

Music from every culture throughout history is now available at the click of a mouse. Prior to the development of recording, the unfamiliar largely separated musical cultures. This paper sets out a narrative to illustrate the framework through which a universalist approach to music emerged over the period 1871–1970, derived from placing in relation to one another accounts of the influence of three historical figures. The first is Darwin, whose theories of evolution embraced speculation on the origin and purpose of music, and who himself wrote about the effect on him of encountering unfamiliar musical styles in the Southern Hemisphere. The second is Grainger, influenced by Darwin's work and persuasively concerned to open musical contact between all cultures. The third is Blacking, a pioneer in ethnomusicology and commentator on Grainger's ideas. Tracing the links between these authors inevitably represents an English-language historical perspective on the issues of colonization, cultural appropriation, and the educational influence of a dominant culture. In offering such a historical account of fluctuating experience of 'the other' in music, the aim is to illustrate these authors' contribution towards convergence on an open, informed position consistent with viewing musical exchange from a universalist perspective.

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Introduction: Historical Developments and Music Education

This article sets out to place in sequence some of the key experiences of intercultural contact in the field of music, and to consider their relevance to the practice internationally of music education today. Emerging from exemplification of such musical exchange and response to the musically unfamiliar, a link is presented to the significant new perspectives which emerged in the field of evolutionary theory that led to the view of music as a formative cultural practice indicative of human values and their transmission. Through an alternation of these two perspectives, the narrative and the reflective, the article explores the relationship between these different forms of evidence, together with their implications for education that have themselves arisen from such an evolutionary stance.

Prelude: Music and *The World Encompassed*

From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, naval exploration beyond Europe, the Mediterranean, and the north coast of Africa revealed new marvels: the Atlantic coast of Africa, and the Indian Ocean beyond the Cape of Good Hope; the Americas; subsequently the Pacific.[1] Contact between European explorers and non-Western music inevitably followed, with varying consequences. Voyages to the South Seas enabled the first European encounters with the music of the East Indies, New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Islands. Sir Francis Drake and the company of his ship *The Golden Hind*, having crossed the Pacific east to west, made landfall on the island of Java in March 1580. The following, from *The World Encompassed* (1628/1854), is the first account in English of what we now know as gamelan:

> One day amongst the rest, viz., March 21, Raja Donan coming aboard us, in requital of our music which was made to him, presented our general with his country music, which though it were of a very strange kind, yet the sound was pleasant and delightful.[2]

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[1] Long voyages towards and into Europe also established contact across previously uncharted seas: these include expeditions from, respectively, Persia and China. Ronald W. Ferrier, “The European Diplomacy of Shāh ʿAbbās I and the First Persian Embassy to England,” *Iran* 11, no. 1 (1973): 75–92; Gavin Menzies, *1434: The Year a Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

[2] Francis Drake, *The World Encompassed: Being His Next Voyage to That to Nombre de Dios*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1854).

A later British voyage of exploration to the Pacific brought back the first evidence in music notation of the performance of songs by people from these remote cultures.[3] James Burney, who made the transcriptions, was the son of Charles Burney, author of the first comprehensive history of music in the English language. The younger Burney went to sea because he was more adventurer than academic. He nevertheless rose to prominence in the service of Captain James Cook, and was responsible for taking control of the expedition on the occasion of Cook's murder in Hawaii that ended the captain's third Pacific voyage in 1779.[4,5]

A lieutenant on Cook's second Pacific expedition (1772–75), Burney notated a Māori melody and reported that it was sometimes sung in parallel thirds "except the 2 last notes which are the same."[6] This encounter with expressive harmony and cadential reinforcement in a people whose practices have had no previous contact with European musical conventions must have come as a surprise to the son of the author Charles Burney. Charles's *History of Music*, whose first published volume appeared in 1776, had clearly established music as being descended from Classical Greek and Biblical antecedents.[7] James Cook himself recognized the singing of the Māori to be "harmonious enough but very dolefull to a European ear."[8] They were to meet other examples of convergent evolution of part-singing. In Tonga, Burney notated the singing of a four-note melody which he ascribed to the Aeolian mode, illustrating the way that some singers maintained the lowest (tonic) note as a drone: "It puts me in mind of the Church Singing among Roman Catholics."[9] Cook found Tongan singing "musical and harmonious, noways harsh or disagreeable."[10] Despite more than 40,000 years of genetic, geographical, cultural, and linguistic separation, Polynesians and Europeans proved susceptible to the same elements of musical organization in devising group song.

European Reception and Evaluation of the Musically Unfamiliar

Recognition that evidence of the kind James Burney provided might illustrate some kind of universality of musical ability was by no means immediate, if we compare Cook's and Burney's perceptions to the view of a near-contemporary, John Hullah:

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[3] James Burney, *With Captain James Cook in the Antarctic and Pacific: The Private Journal of James Burney, Second Lieutenant of the Adventure on Cook's Second Voyage, 1772–1773*, ed. Beverley Hooper (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1975).

[4] John Cawle Beaglehole, "The Death of Captain Cook," *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 11, no. 43 (1964): 289–305.

[5] Marshall Sahlins, "Captain Cook at Hawaii," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 98, no. 4 (1989): 371–423.

[6] Burney, *With Captain Cook,* 57.

[7] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[8] Burney, *With Captain Cook,* 57.

[9] Burney, *With Captain Cook,* 84.

[10] Burney, *With Captain Cook,* 84.

"The European system, though the exigencies of practice prevent its being absolutely true, is nearer the truth than any other."[11,12] By contrast, the influential music theorist Alexander Ellis argued on acoustic grounds that the contrasting tuning standards of the music of different cultures were all of equal validity.[13]

But prejudicial disbelief remained the norm. Basing his assumptions on Charles Burney's historical account, Lord Montague, a financial backer of the South Sea voyages of discovery, objected to James Burney's evidence of the South Sea Islanders singing polyphonically:

> As this circumstance, of their *singing in parts*, has been much doubted by persons eminently skilled in music, and would be exceedingly curious if it was clearly ascertained, it is to be lamented that it cannot be more positively authenticated ... These gentlemen have fully testified, that the Friendly Islanders ... sung in chorus, and not only produced octaves, according to the different species of the voice, but fell on concords, such as were not disagreeable to the ear ... It is ... scarcely credible, that a people, semi-barbarous, should naturally arrive at any perfection in that art, which is much doubted whether the Greeks and Romans, with all their refinements in music, ever attained...[14]

Indeed, European reception of the musically unfamiliar tended, excepting these reports of Drake and Burney, to be dismissive and hostile. The story of music as a European achievement had early established itself as orthodox: non-European music failed to conform to its standards.[15] Even Cook's and Burney's comments, which are positive and generous, betray surprise at the recognizable elements they encountered ('noways harsh or disagreeable'). This contrasts markedly with an earlier report of music in African Guinea by a Dutch official in 1705:

> Their musical instruments are various and very numerous, but all of them yield a horrid and barbarous shocking sound: The chief of them are the mentioned Horns, made … of small Elephant's teeth … Sometimes they blow these Horns so well, that though it is not agreeable, yet it is not so horrid as to require a whole Bale of Cotton annually to stop ones

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[11] Curt Sachs, *The Wellsprings of Music* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1961), 7.

[12] A viewpoint claimed to be reflected in Schenkerian music theory: see Peter Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame," *Journal of the Society for Music Theory* 26, no. 2 (2020).

[13] Alexander John Ellis, "On the Musical Scales of Various Nations," *Journal of the Society of Arts* (1885). https://soundandscience.de/text/musical-scales-various-nations.

[14] David Irving, "The Pacific in the Minds and Music of Enlightenment Europe," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 2, no. 2 (2005), 228.

[15] Rousseau famously saw this in the same negative light: "de tous les peuples de la terre ... les Européens sont les seuls qui aient une **harmonie**, des Accords, & qui trouvent ce mélange **agréable**" ("of all the peoples on earth … the Europeans are the only ones to have harmony, chords, and who find this blend agreeable"). While Rousseau's evaluation of the value of harmony differs from the progressivist stance of Montague, he nevertheless assumed it to be a specifically European achievement, and by no means a universal attribute of the "noble savage." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique,* Collection complète des oeuvres de J.-J. Rousseau, vol. 9. (Geneva, 1782).

> Ears… Their second sort of instruments are their drums …all which produce a dismal and horrid noise. …They always set a little boy to strike upon a hollow piece of iron with a piece of wood; which alone makes a noise more detestable than the drums and Horns together.[16]

The reception is no less negative where indigenous and European elements are combined, as in this account of a concert by Brazilian musicians in Portugal in 1730:

> … one has never seen so peaceful a feast with so many blasts: there was a sequence of minuets, and many discant singers because for their part, the Blacks of the Rosary, making a well concerted dissonance with guitar, gral and violin, and playing the horn by the cumbe […] for at the same time they played among them pandeiros, stones, arranhol [maybe a scratching-board, or reco-reco], board-shaped guitar, cocoa violin, whistle, berimbau, and rattles, and the mixture made such a disconcert that, if it was that way in the village, one wonders how it would be in Hell! In short, the feast was grave but God protect us from it next year.[17]

Perhaps it is the case that instrumental construction, dependent on available materials and the prevailing technology to shape them, resulted in a greater variety of unfamiliar sonorities than the human singing voice: for instance, the instrumentarium within Europe, itself largely developed from imported Arabic and Asian models, was associated with specific functions and locations, the indoor, the outdoor, the church, and chamber.[18,19,20] With certain exceptions such as overtone singing and yodeling, the human voice tends, by contrast, to conform more consistently to the employment of a shared anatomical potential.[21] The following commentary on Charles Darwin's account in the *Beagle* diaries of hearing South Pacific Island song recalls the open-minded curiosity found in Cook's and Burney's reports:

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[16] Crispo Okumo, "Africa Awake: Celebrating a Coming of Age of African Music in the Millennium," in *Music of the Spheres: Proceedings of the 24th World Conference of the International Society for Music Education*, ed. M. Taylor and B. Gregory (Regina: University of Regina Faculty of Education/ISME, 2000), 309.

[17] Rogerio Budasz, *A Música no Tempo de Gregório de Mattos/Music in the Time of Gregório de Mattos* (Curitiba: Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2004).

[18] Pedro Espi-Sanchis and Nicholas Bannan, "Found Objects in the Musical Practices of Hunter-Gatherers: Implications for the Evolution of Instrumental Music," in *Music, Language, and Human Evolution*, ed. Nicholas Bannan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173–198.

[19] Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle: Contenant la Théorie et la Pratique de la Musique* (1936; repr., Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975).

[20] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum* (Wolfenbüttel: Holwein, 1619).

[21] Trân Quang Hai and Nicholas Bannan, "Vocal Traditions of the World: Towards an Evolutionary Account of Voice Production in Music," in *Music, Language, and Human Evolution*, ed. Nicholas Bannan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 142–172.

> Charles loved good tunes, but had difficulty remembering them. … He remembered … a song that a Tahitian girl had sung to him when he landed there on HMS *Beagle* in 1835. He wrote in his diary at the time that "Numbers of children were playing on the beach, and had lighted bonfires which illuminated the placid sea and surrounding trees; others in circles were singing Tahitian verses. We seated ourselves on the sand and joined the circle. The songs were impromptu and I believe related to our arrival. One little girl sang a line which the rest took up in parts, forming a very pretty chorus. The air was singular and their voices melodious. The whole scene made us unequivocally aware that we were seated on the shores of an island in the South Sea."[22]

What may lead to this apparent distinction in reception between those able to tolerate and respect the cultural products with which they are unfamiliar compared to those who reject and condemn them?

The Embrace of the Unfamiliar and Post-Colonial Morphologies of Style

Cultural exchange between isolated groups is as old as our species, and evidence for it exists in the earliest archaeological and historical records.[23,24,25,26,27] Colonization, together with the globalization that has followed in its wake, has accelerated the inevitable process whereby the formerly exotic has combined with local traditional transmission to enrich modes of creativity. One could see this as the cultural parallel to the mixing of the gene pool: with similar consequences for the positions adopted in its evaluation. However, migration can also suppress culture: or the fear of it doing so can promote xenophobia; or foment the repression of cultural manifestation.

The forms that cultural exchange can take span a spectrum that embraces both syncretism (the melding of elements from two separate sources) and appropriation (the unacknowledged absorption of an element into a new cultural niche). The phenomenon of cultural ownership may be violated both through loss and through exploitation. The Hebrew psalmist illustrates this: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion"/"How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"[28] Contact between cultures thus leads to varieties of exchange: in addition to appropriation and syncretism, one could add assimilation (negotiated blending of elements); imitation (the influence of an exotic element within an existing genre); and synthesis (the development of a new element out of the coming-together of independent influences). A detailed elucidation of categories on these lines, together with their exemplification across spans of history and geography, is beyond the scope of this article.[29] But in considering the creative potential of acknowledging and comprehending these kinds of phenomena, a few instances may illuminate the nature of what is in many ways an evolutionary process, sometimes accomplished swiftly, sometimes leading to the eclipse or elimination of one thread, sometimes blending with ease, as with the similar processes by which spoken languages merge and mutate when brought into collision by conquest, trade, or mass migration.[30,31,32] Forms of cultural exchange are evident in all aspects of human interaction and behavior, including, in addition to language: clothing, food, architecture, religion, sport, bodily decoration, domestic furnishing, and hairstyling, as well as music. The case of food presents an interesting model, whereby the cuisine of several cultures underwent accelerated development as new products were made available through exploration and global trade: pasta, chili, chocolate, tomatoes, potatoes, maize, spices, and pineapples.[33] The signature dishes of some cultures were only achieved subsequent to the introduction of these new imports. The assimilation of new cultural influences across the spectrum of activities affected would appear to have been piecemeal rather than *en bloc*, occurring in one form or medium independently of others. For instance, while the works of Haydn received their first performances in rooms of the palaces at Eisenstadt and Vienna elegantly decorated with Chinese wallpaper, porcelain, and furniture, these orientalist trappings made no discernible impact on his music. Francis Piggott in 1893 expressed this trend to the acceptance of material possessions but not music:

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[22] Randal Keynes, *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001), 84–85.

[23] Adam Rutherford, *A Brief History of Everyone Who Ever Lived: The Story in Our Genes* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016).

[24] Victor Grauer, *Sounding the Depths: Tradition and the Voices of History* (CreateSpace, 2011).

[25] Yosef Garfinkel, *Dancing at the Dawn of Agriculture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

[26] Steven Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

[27] John Curtis Franklin, *Terpander: The Invention of Music in the Orientalizing Period* (London: University College London, 2002).

[28] Psalm 137.

> The decorative arts of the East–of India, China, Japan–have rarely failed to charm and captivate the Western mind … With this appreciation compare our attitude towards Eastern music–what a contrast! … It is clear that whilst our eyes welcome the Entirely Strange, our ears do not.[34,35,36]

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[29] See, however, Bennett Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

[30] Derek Bickerton, *Language and Species* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[31] Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

[32] Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

[33] Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Food: A History* (London: McMillan, 2002).

[34] Angela Völker, “An Indian Chinoiserie from an Austrian Palace: The Textile Furnishings for Prince Eugene’s State Bedroom in Schloss Hof,” *Riggisberger Berichte, Vol. 14: A Taste for the Exotic: Foreign Influences on Early Eighteenth-Century Silk Designs, ed. Anna Jolly* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2007).

[35] Michael Elia Yonan, “Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Maria Theresa’s Vienna,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 4 (2004): 652–672.

[36] Francis Taylor Piggott, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan* (London: Batsford, 1893), 319.

Orientalism in the early development of European music has a history as long as our knowledge of the medium. John Franklin attributes to Terpander (seventh century BC) documentation of the central Asian influences on the tuning of the lyre, suggested in inscriptions on the marble Parian Chronicle studied in the eighteenth century by Charles Burney at the Ashmolean museum in Oxford.[37] Ralph Locke analyzed a range of examples of orientalism in European musical repertoires.[38] He discussed the proposal of Jeremy Day-O'Connell that the *Rondo alla turca* finale of Mozart's A major piano sonata (K. 331) may be claimed as the earliest acknowledged example ("musical exoticism saw only a limited practice before 1800").[39,40] But prior attributions would include the movements marked *Moresca* (in the Moorish style) in the music of Monteverdi almost two centuries earlier. Nevertheless, while operatic depictions of the Orient feature in the operas of Purcell and Rameau, there is relatively little evidence of distinctly *musical* influence.[41]

Benedict Zon reviewed a growing long-nineteenth century literature that represents the first stirrings of comparative musicology in the writings of British travelers, colonial administrators, and scholars.[42] These included William Jones, the first writer in English to describe pitch organization in Indian music; William Crotch, who wrote objectively about the tuning and instrumentation of Indonesian *gamelan*; and Charles Samuel Myers, who employed phonographic transcription to represent non-Western music he placed within the framework of human psychology (see also Bor for these and other early practitioners of methods that informed the development of ethnomusicology).[43,44,45,46] Music was, nevertheless, initially a subject of theoretical study rather than influence. Crotch, for instance, was a significant composer and teacher, but *gamelan* seems to have left no trace on his output. But this was prior to the development of fast, reliable travel, and of mechanical recording. Once *gamelan* had been heard live at the 1889 Paris Exhibition, representations of it entered the musical language of, first, Debussy, and then Ravel, Orff, Messiaen, and Britten.[47]

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[37] Franklin, *Terpander.*

[38] Ralph P. Locke, "A Broader View of Musical Exoticism," *Journal of Musicology* 24, no. 4 (2007): 477–521. https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2007.24.4.477.

[39] Jeremy Day-O'Connell, *Pentatonicism from the Eighteenth Century to Debussy* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

[40] Day-O'Connell, *Pentatonicism*, 48.

[41] Timothy D. Taylor, "Peopling the Stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representations in the Eighteenth Century," *Cultural Critique* 36 (1997): 55–88.

[42] Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music.*

[43] William Jones, "On the Musical Modes of the Hindus," in *Asiatick Researches* vol. 3, ed. William Jones (1792): 55–87.

[44] Originally published in 1831: William Crotch, "Substance of Several Courses of Lectures on Music," ed. Bernarr Rainbow, Classic Texts in Music Education, vol. 16 (1831; repr., Aberystwyth: Boethius Press, 1986).

[45] Charles S. Myers, "The Study of Primitive Music," *Musical Antiquary* 3 (1912): 121–141.

[46] Joep Bor, "The Rise of Ethnomusicology: Sources on Indian Music c. 1780–c. 1890," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 20 (1988): 51–73.

In the visual arts and literature, orientalism was a defining feature of European artistic and decorative practice in the nineteenth century. A few examples must suffice to characterize this widespread cultural development. In the field of painting, Ingres became fascinated by the female nude depicted in an oriental context. Examples include *Les femmes d'Alger* (1834), *L'Odalisque et l'esclave* (1839), and *The Turkish Bath* (1862–63). While Ingres achieved these scenes without ever travelling outside Europe, Gauguin migrated to Tahiti to achieve the paintings by which he is best known, such as *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897). Dégas drew and sculpted dancers in the revealing pose of the *Arabesque*, a title Debussy adopted for two of his piano miniatures.

Writers were also on the move, both in reality and in their imaginations. Rimbaud spent a decade in Abyssinia. Rudyard Kipling travelled widely but is most strongly associated with the Indian setting of *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Kim* (1901). Gustave Flaubert documented his travels in Egypt, experience that informed his historical novel *Salammbô* (1862), on which Mussorgsky attempted an unfinished opera. Robert Louis Stevenson moved to the Pacific largely for health reasons, eventually settling on Samoa. One of the self-styled 'Apaches,' Tristan Klingsor did not need to leave France to concoct the sensuously orientalist lyrics for Ravel's song-cycle *Schéhérazade* (1903).

Travel writing, studies of the arts and culture of faraway places, and the appearance of musicians from elsewhere as performers in European centers, all provided the opportunity for composers to reference the exotic without necessarily experiencing it in context. Berlioz explored the scene-setting properties of the Dorian mode and asymmetric dance-rhythms in *L'Enfance du Christ* (1854), while Saint-Saëns colorfully combined oriental modality, such as the Augmented 2nd derived from Arabic scales, and driving, ecstatic rhythms in *Samson et Dalila* (1877), as also did Richard Strauss in *Salomé* (1905).

Significantly, the exotic and unfamiliar may also be revealed from within a culture in which its potential has been hiding in plain sight. For instance, Schubert's 1828 setting in Hebrew of Psalm 92 for the Vienna Synagogue, featuring its cantor, his friend the composer Solomon Sulzer, accesses in this last year of his life a texture and tonality unique in his output. In Central Europe, "gypsy" and "zigeuner" influences (that we would now more correctly refer to as Romani) emerged in the music of Brahms and Liszt, alongside other regional dialects and folk elements. Iberia was an especially rich source of new modes and rhythms. The Andalusian influences on Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) met with the approval of Tchaikovsky, and music in the Spanish style both set a fashion in Russia and illustrated parallels with the tonal organization of Central Asian music. Russian obsession with the orientalism of Spain, from Glinka's *Summer Night in*

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[47] Mervyn Cooke, "The East in the West: Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998): 258–280.

Madrid (1851) to the Spanish Dance from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1877) and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol* (1887), prompted the Russians' exploration of the musically exotic on their own Asian continent. Performances he heard of the music of Ravel including octatonic pitch organization clearly influenced the early scores Stravinsky composed for the Ballets Russes, and the composition of *The Rite of Spring* (1913) combines this harmonic technique with liberal borrowings from Lithuanian folk music.[48,49] While Morrison's analysis of *The Rite* traced the published sources that Stravinsky consulted for the melodies he employs, he also proposed that the composer may, through incorporating this material into the work, have been seeking an element of antiquity that was itself exotic and which he associated with the Lithuanian origins of his own family history.[50]

Recent developments in musicology have focused on the consequences for local musical practice of cultural exchange and colonization, telling a story that lies outside the conventional music history account. Jing documented the introduction of the violin into China, where Pedrini, a student of Corelli, was active at the court of the Emperor.[51] Corelli's influence also found its way to the Jesuit missions of Bolivia and Paraguay,[52] where it formed the basis of the syncretic style of sacred choral music accompanied by strings and written by native composers that has been transcribed by Gerardo Huseby.[53] David Irving illustrated how Malay musicians rapidly adopted European performance practice, their music judged by European commentators as the style within East Asia most like their own.[54] In turn, the musically distinctive Cape Malay culture of migrant workers in South Africa represents a further cultural admixture that blended the Afrikaans language of their colonial masters with the Muslim Dutch-Malay elements they imported.[55]

Examples of appropriation and assimilation of, as well as satirical reference to, the exotic abound in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music. What is 'real' and

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[48] Steven Baur, "Ravel's 'Russian' Period: Octatonicism in His Early Works, 1893–1908," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 3 (1999): 531–592.

[49] William J. Morrison, "The Lithuanian Roots of Igor Stravinsky and *The Rite of Spring*," *Draugas News*, May 15, 2013. https://www.draugas.org/news/the-lithuanian-roots-of-igor-stravinsky-and-the-rite-of-spring/.

[50] Morrison, *Lithuanian Roots*.

[51] Miao Jing, "Italian Violin Music in China," *Revista de musicología* 16, no. 4 (1993): 1912–1915.

[52] Leonardo J. Waisman, "Arcadia Meets Utopia: Corelli in the South American Wilderness," in *Arcangelo Corelli fra mito e realtà storica: nuove prospettive d'indagine musicologica e interdisciplinare nel 350o anniversario della nascita* [Arcangelo Corelli Between Myth and Historical Reality: New Perspectives of Musicological and Interdisciplinary Investigation on the 350th Anniversary of His Birth] (Proceedings of the International Studies Congress, Fusignano, September 11–14, 2003), ed. Gregory Richard Barnett, Antonella D'Ovidio, and Stefano La Via (Firenze: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 651–685.

[53] Bernardo Illari, "Sacred Music from Eighteenth-Century Bolivia," *Notes* 74, no. 2 (2017): 303–306.

[54] David R. M. Irving, "Hybridity and Harmony: Nineteenth-Century British Discourse on Syncretism and Intercultural Compatibility in Malay Music," in *Interpreting Diversity: Europe and the Malay World*, ed. Christina Skott (London: Routledge, 2018), 81–105.

[55] "The Cape Malay," South African History Online, accessed May 21, 2024. https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/cape-malay.

what ‘invented’ in the following? Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Mikado* (1885); Elgar’s incorporation of the rabbinical *shofar* into the orchestra of his oratorio *The Apostles* (1903); Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1926); Coleridge-Taylor’s *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast* (1898); Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *The King and I* (1951). All had a spellbinding effect on audiences in their day, and several of these works remain pillars of the repertoire in their genre.

We have in this section considered some of the artworks and styles that have emerged from the processes of colonization and cultural exchange following the great periods of initial exploration. A new awareness of the phenomenon of the unfamiliar arose in its wake, and an innovative theoretical position to explain this arose as developments in the human sciences presented a parallel to the range of cultural experiences on offer.

The Emergence and Reception of Theories of Musical Universality

Where Rousseau was in 1782 unable to assign sophisticated musicality to the “noble savage,”[56] and Lord Montague refused to trust Burney’s transcriptions, other responses to exploration identified musical evidence more positively and contributed to new assumptions about the role of music in human society. In 1836, language historian Wilhelm von Humboldt, informed by the geological and anthropological investigations of his brother Alexander, proposed that “mankind is a singing species.”[57] Charles Darwin, concurrently engaged on the HMS *Beagle* voyage that formed the basis of his theories of evolution, became acquainted with the work of both Humboldt brothers. In his 1871 work *The Descent of Man*,[58] in which he introduced the theory of sexual selection, he exemplified its application in tracing the emergence of acoustic communication across a range of species, preparing the way for musical vocalization to represent the bridge between animal communication and human language.[59] Others, notably Herbert Spencer, proposed that music arose out of the impassioned expression of an existing capacity for speech.[60,61]

Nevertheless, an emerging evolutionary model for thinking about the role of music in culture underpinned the development of systematic ethnomusicology and was a key influence on the synthesis of scientific method and anthropological contextualization represented by the Berlin School of Stumpf (1911), von Hornbostel, and Sachs.[62,63,64,65]

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[56] Rousseau, *Dictionnaire*.

[57] Wilhelm Von Humboldt, *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwickelung des Menschengeschlechts* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1836).

[58] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, 1871).

[59] Nicholas Bannan, “Darwin, Music and Evolution: New Insights from Family Correspondence on *The Descent of Man*,” *Musicae Scientiae* 21, no. 1 (2017): 3–25.

[60] Herbert Spencer, “The Origin of Music,” *Mind* 15, no. 60 (1890): 449–468.

[61] See also Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: Norton, 1997).

The influence of Darwin's voyage extended beyond his own subsequent development of evolutionary theory.[66,67] Darwin's documentation of song encountered in South America and the Pacific, and the context in which it was performed, provided instances to which Edward Burnett Tylor referred as illustrative of the universality of music within the evolutionary framework from which he constructed the methods of the new science of anthropology.[68] Tylor's account of the musical features of language accords with Darwin's 1872 *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*:

> … the fact that particular expressions of the face are accompanied by corresponding and dependent expressions of vocal tone, only requires an observer or a looking-glass to prove it. … The effect of the emotional tone does not even require fitness in the meaning of the spoken words, for nonsense in an unknown tongue may be made to convey, when spoken with expressive intonation, the feelings which are displayed on the speaker's face.[69]
>
> By eliminating from speech all effects of gesture, of expression of face, and of emotional tone, we go far toward reducing it to that system of conventional articulate sounds which the grammarian and the comparative philologist consider as language.[70]

Darwin's speculations on the origins of music largely failed to convince his immediate successors, partly because, by his own admission, his limited acoustic and musical understanding prevented him elaborating on his proposal.[71] For instance, he was badly misled by the unscientific 1869 claims of Sir Duncan Gibb that the different races had differently shaped larynges.[72,73] Nevertheless, Darwin's evolutionary thinking, and especially the recognition of universals of human behavior such as he identified for musicality, was central to the work of some early exponents of anthropology and ethnomusicology. This led to a divergence within the field:

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[62] Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music*.

[63] Carl Stumpf, *The Origins of Music,* trans. David Trippett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[64] Erich *M. von* Hornbostel, *Music of the Orient* (London: Parlophone, 1934).

[65] Curt Sachs, *The Wellsprings of Music* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1962).

[66] Frederick Burkhardt, *Charles Darwin: The Beagle Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[67] Frank W. Nicholas and Jan Nicholas, *Charles Darwin in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[68] Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871).

[69] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1872; London: HarperCollins, 1998).

[70] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 166.

[71] Bannan, "Darwin, Music and Evolution."

[72] Duncan Gibb, "The Character of the Voice in the Nations of Asia and Africa, Contrasted with that of the Nations of Europe," *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*, 3 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1869), 244–259.

[73] Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 632.

> For most of the century after Darwin wrote about expression, his views were rejected or simply ignored. The intellectual and scientific world was dominated by those who saw culture as determining every important aspect of our behaviour. As influential an anthropologist as Margaret Mead [1975] claimed that facial expressions differ from culture to culture as much as language, customs, attitudes and values… A few scientists went on to claim that the very idea of emotions was an invention of Western culture.[74]

A robust theoretical approach on Darwinian lines to music as a component of evolved human behavior nevertheless emerged towards the end of the twentieth century,[75,76] embracing the perspective developed by John Blacking.[77,78]

Models of Musical Development

Music is transmitted in culture through processes that preserve and adapt the capacity to perform, sometimes demanding a conservative and precise continuation of existing traditions, sometimes rewarding innovation and individuality of expression. The ‘progressivist’ stance we encountered earlier in Western prejudices regarding the superiority of European music has largely been superseded, though despite the spirit of decolonization and indigenizing of music education practice, its traces can still be detected. As twentieth century music education at school and tertiary levels became more systematically organized, written curricula have since emerged that identify with and represent underlying values and assumptions. A continuum can be pictured as spanning two widely contrasting positions: (1) a retained progressivism, whereby historically defined ‘primitive’ music is subject to increasing organizational complexity, defining the assumption that familiar styles transcend others; and (2) universalism, in which musical potential develops in accordance with widespread cultural norms. The progressivist stance can be traced from the perspective defined by Adler, consistent with the views of Hanslick and Schenker: European music as a superior product of historical development.[79,80,81] Universalism embraces the positions of

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[74] Paul Ekman, introduction to *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, by Charles Darwin, 3rd ed. (London: HarperCollins, 1998), xxiii.

[75] Frank Livingstone, “Did the Australopithecines Sing?” *Current Anthropology* no. 13, (1973): 25–29.

[76] Nils Wallin, *Biomusicology: Neurophysiological, Neuropsychological, and Evolutionary Perspectives on the Origins and Purposes of Music* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1991).

[77] John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973).

[78] John Blacking, “*A Commonsense View of All Music”: Reflections on Percy Grainger's Contribution to Ethnomusicology and Music Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[79] Guido Adler, “Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* (Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885).

[80] Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics* (London: Novello, 1891).

[81] Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony*. Vol. 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

Humboldt, Helmholtz, Darwin, Tylor, and Nietszche: music as a signalling system that predates language and is common to all human cultures.[82,83,84,85,86]

Current self-reflection in musicology prompted by the compelling questions raised by Philip Ewell regarding the 'white' framing of music theory illustrates that there remains a need to conceptualize thinking about music within a more flexible and culturally representative model.[87] This is especially the case not only in the university sector that Ewell primarily addressed, but also in music education from kindergarten to secondary school. One possible perspective that may stimulate new thinking is the 'commonsense view of all music' first proposed by the Australian composer Percy Grainger, and later reviewed and extended by the British ethnomusicologist John Blacking.[88]

Grainger, Blacking, and 'A Commonsense View of All Music'

The emerging evolutionary model for addressing the role of music in culture underpinned the development of systematic ethnomusicology of the Berlin School of Sachs and von Hornbostel and was highly influential both philosophically and methodologically on Percy Grainger's musical activities. Grainger made and collected phonograph recordings. He advocated a democratization of musical participation through massed singing and the development of community percussion ensembles.[89] He also analyzed and notated the performances of musicians with detailed fidelity to non-standard tuning and precise rhythmic organization.[90]

In a series of radio lectures broadcast in his native Australia in 1934, Grainger set out a theoretical framework for thinking about music as a human universal, seeking out and illuminating parallels and archetypes that permitted links to be heard and explored between the musical works of cultures widely separated in geographical location and historical chronology. Blacking's extensive commentary on Grainger's ideas,[91] also embracing his own convictions about the universality of human musicality arising from

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[82] Wilhelm Von Humboldt. *Humboldt: 'On Language': On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species* [1836] (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[83] Hermann von Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone* (1885), translated by A. J. Ellis (New York: Dover, 1954).

[84] Darwin, *The Descent of Man*.

[85] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.

[86] Friedrich Nietszche, *On Music and Words* [1871], translated by W. Kauffmann: reprinted in Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 103–120.

[87] Philip Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame," *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (2020).

[88] Blacking, *A Commonsense View*.

[89] Teresa Balough, "Percy Grainger as Music Educator and International Music Pioneer," *Australian Journal of Music Education* 29 (1981): 3–8.

[90] Blacking, *A Commonsense View*, 181–184.

[91] Blacking, *A Commonsense View*.

his work with the Venda people of South Africa, has implications for the advocacy and practices of music education that have yet to be fully realized:

> It seems to me that the commonsense view of music is to approach all the world's available Music with an open mind, just as we approach the world's literature or painting or philosophy.[92]
>
> Although we find music flourishing in fullest perfection amid great civilisations, such as those of China and Europe, we also find music of a thoroughly perfect and satisfying kind amongst the most primitive savages – just as we find glorious drawings by the primitive Bushmen in Africa and bafflingly lovely paintings in the stone-age caves of Alta Mira, in Spain.[93]

Grainger returned to this theme in setting out the aims of the Grainger Museum: "I feel very strongly that musical culture in all parts of the world suffers from the lack of a cosmopolitan outlook on music."[94]

Models Derived from 'A Commonsense View of All Music'

Grainger's series of twelve broadcast lectures, each illustrated with recordings of a chronologically and geographically wide range of examples, set out to convince the listener of links and parallels between the music of different periods and cultures. His approach is akin to the theory of archetypes through which Jung and Lévi-Strauss examined the structure of myths, narratives, and symbols.[95,96] The sequence of topics in the lectures is designed to explore his personal evaluation of the relationship between stylistic features and their appearance in a wide range of cultures, with some attempts at characterizing patterns of geographical distribution. Grainger transcends a progressive stance in his strong representation of antique music (that we would now refer to as Early Music), much of which would have been as exotic to his listeners as selections from unfamiliar cultures. Some of his categorization is based on emotional correlates (sublime and frivolous elements), others on acoustic phenomena (echo music; various systems of harmony):

(1) The universalist attitude toward music
(2) Scales in the past, the present, and the future

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[92] Grainger (1934), in Blacking, *A Commonsense View*, 151.

[93] Grainger (1934), in Blacking, *A Commonsense View*, 154.

[94] Percy Aldridge Grainger, "The Aims of the Grainger Museum," *Australian Journal of Music Education,* 18 (1976): 5–7. This is a reprinted version of Grainger's 1955 statement of aims for the Grainger Museum.

[95] Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, Collected Works of C. G. Jung vol. 9 part 1, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Bollingen, 1981).

[96] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Harper & Row, 1975).

(3) The Mongolian and Mohammedan influences upon European music
(4) Melody versus rhythm
(5) Sublime and frivolous elements in music
(6) The superiority of Nordic music
(7) The development of European string music
(8) Echo-music
(9) Various systems of harmony
(10) Songs with instrumental accompaniment
(11) 'Tuneful percussion'
(12) The goal of musical progress

Two titles may cause alarm: 'The superiority of Nordic music' and 'The goal of musical progress.' The former suggests that the isolated lifestyle of herders in northern climates has given rise to folk music that has informed the art music which Grainger clearly relishes: it represents his accounting for a personal preference. The latter is not predicated on progressive interpretation, but advocates the achievement of tonal freedom consistent with Grainger's interest in 'free music,' including microtones and glissandi between pitches.

Blacking's commentary on the content and structure of Grainger's broadcasts draws on his comparison of the participatory role of music in the life of the Venda with the elitist, provider-consumer (and progressivist) approach to music he had depicted as the crisis in Western culture in *How Musical Is Man*?[97,98] Like Grainger, he envisioned a world in which musical participation is widened beyond the performer-listener model. As a composer himself, Blacking advocated the importance of musical creativity in the transmission of ability, a position consistent with the application of evolutionary thinking to music education.[99,100] Indeed, one illustration of how historical incidents mentioned in this article could resonate in the classroom might be their musical recreation in creative projects: a depiction of Drake's crewmen singing madrigals to the gamelan performers of Indonesia; performance based on James Burney's notations of the songs of Pacific Islanders; and so on.

Limitations of the Perspectives Reviewed, and a Possible Way Forward

Taken as a response to Ewell's concerns about the white racial agenda of music theory,[101] a conceptual framework derived from the historical sequence we have

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[97] Blacking, *A Commonsense View.*

[98] Blacking, *How Musical is Man?*

[99] Blacking's *Te Deum* has been performed and recorded by The Winthrop Singers in an edition made by the author from the composer's manuscript held in the Callaway Archive at the University of Western Australia.

[100] Nicholas Bannan, *Every Child a Composer: Music Education in an Evolutionary Perspective* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019).

[101] Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame."

explored may require further justification. How might a credible approach to the issues raised be derived from the evolutionary model of a British Victorian explorer, influential on an Australian composer, explored and extended by a British ethnomusicologist? Clearly there is a perceived need to propose new theoretical approaches to the knotty problem of cultural supremacy, where a contributor to the field may themselves be assumed a representative of one or other dominant culture. In assembling instances of the positive responses to "first contact" in the musical experience of Drake, Burney, and, especially, Darwin, Grainger, and Blacking, the intention has been to share material of this kind as a potential part of the process of music education itself. Informed historical perspectives, and the universalist position they represent, may prove illustrative of the challenges faced in such aspects of musical transmission as repertoire selection, and, in educational contexts, curriculum design and content. A new consensus requires elaboration that permits unbiased technical description which embraces the unfamiliar, in the interests of encouraging the establishment of greater openness in the cultural representation evident in music education. What is thus offered here is a provisional position statement that provides music teachers with a means of response, able to interact with representatives of musical performance and education interculturally, and open to discussing the challenges identified. An eventual goal could be to devise informed guidance for the establishment of thinking about music and its transmission that transcends the potential impasse whereby traditional viewpoints and practices may prove resistant to change: that achieves 'commonsense' in addressing 'all music' – a universalist acceptance of our shared capacities and inheritance. It reflects the position articulated by Kofi Agawu in his masterly exposure of the colonialist categorization of 'African rhythm':

> An ideology of difference must be replaced by an ideology of sameness so that–somewhat paradoxically–we can gain a better view of difference. In other words, only if we proceed from a premise of sameness and grant difference in the unique expression of that sameness are we likely to get at the true similarities and differences between "African" and "Western" musics.[102]

An educational model able to represent what Agawu describes can offer a means to bridge the gap between familiar and unfamiliar in which each individual or group commences with what they know as the basis for exploring the latter. Balancing the search for such a perspective from the Anglophone narrative presented here embraces the contribution of teacher-researchers such as Dave Dargie, Kwabena Nketia, and Patricia Shehan Campbell.[103,104,105]

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[102] Kofi Agawu, "The Invention of African Rhythm," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 3 (1995): 393.

Conclusion: A Framework for a Respectful, Universalist Music Curriculum

Blacking favored an approach to music education informed by evolutionary theory that recognizes musicality as a component of human adaptive development:

> As Charles Darwin pointed out, the environment of human beings, as social animals, is not 'competitive, savage, and brutal', but co-operative; and therefore the fittest human beings are ultimately the most co-operative and those who exercise to the full the extraordinary sensory capacities of the species.[106]

In a later synthesis, Blacking proposed that musical thinking co-evolved with its expression in culture in ways that stress its foundational significance:

> Because music is humanly organized sound, there ought to be relationships between patterns of human organization and the patterns of the sound produced in the course of organized interaction.[107]

A key conclusion of exploring the adaptive origins of human vocal communication is the recognition that it provides every individual with the capacity for self-expression. The remaining challenge for music education, to which Darwin's, Grainger's, and Blacking's ideas lead, is to restore and consolidate the role of individual and collective creativity consistent with an evolutionary account of the emergence of human communication. There is a clear link between inward-looking assumptions regarding the preservation of existing repertoires—for example, the recruitment of ensembles to perform only through the decipherment of existing work—and the setting of boundaries between the familiar and the 'other.' For this reason, 'commonsense' curriculum design will embrace composition and improvisation as extensions of the evolutionary purpose of music: to express and exchange thought and feeling in sound. Creativity harnessed to, and inspired by, technical extension represents the most suitable means of developing response to, and interaction with, the unfamiliar. The purpose both of a

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[103] Dave Dargie, "African Methods of Music Education: Some Reflections," *African Music* 7, no. 3 (1996): 30–43.

[104] J. H. Kwabena Nketia, "Music Education in Africa and the West: We Can Learn From Each Other," *Music Educators Journal* 57, no. 3 (1970): 48–55.

[105] Patricia Shehan Campbell, "World Music Pedagogy," *Teaching General Music: Approaches, Issues, and Viewpoints,* ed. Brent M. Gault and Carlos R. Abril (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 89–111.

[106] Blacking, *A Commonsense View*, 61.

[107] Bruno Nettl, *Music, Culture, and Experience: Selected Papers of John Blacking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 56–57.

creative approach and one open to the unfamiliar is not to generate sameness, but rather to enrich the technical and emotional repertoire, and to reward variety and breadth. A framework for music curriculum design following the pathways mapped by Grainger and Blacking contributes to potential solutions to the global challenges of the twenty-first century, and it outlines pedagogical values and processes that recapture the evolutionary origins of music that Darwin sought to describe. Both conscious of his Anglophone heritage and proud of his country of birth and initial education, Grainger towards the end of his life urged the achievement of a response to his ideas:

> It would be a wonderful thing if Australia should be the first country to live up to the axiom: “Music is a universal language.”[108]

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[108] Grainger, “The Aims of the Grainger Museum.” https://grainger.unimelb.edu.au/discover/aims-of-the-grainger-museum.