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On Musical Cosmopolitanism

Martin Stokes

Two broad areas of consensus reign on matters of musical globalization. One, I’ll refer to as ‘popular’, the other ‘critical’. The popular consensus goes something like this. Advances in communication technologies over the last four decades – by which I mean increases in their power, capacity and reach, coupled with their miniaturization and distribution across the social field – have wrought fundamental changes in the way music circulates. Musics confined to localities now circulate across the globe. Musics that languished in archival obscurity can now be accessed at the click of a mouse. Musics once perceived as foreign and outlandish have become familiar. Isolated musical practices now interact with others, producing energetic new hybrids, global soundscapes. Cultural hierarchies have been toppled as societies reckon with unexpected new sounds coming from without or below. Once we were locals: now we are cosmopolitans. Now we have choice, agency, democratic possibilities for exchange and interaction. And a pleasurable vantage point on the musical goings-on of the world, a feast to enjoy.

This vision – one I connect with the ‘world music’ or ‘world beat’ phenomenon of the mid to late 1980s, and the publications that continue to give it life (The Rough Guide to World Music, The Virgin Directory of World Music, the Songlines journal) – was not without its ambiguities and anxieties. Traditions and ‘roots’ need to be validated – but how, and by whom? If hybridization and musical translation are the new creative principles, how are musical intelligibility and meaning to be maintained, by whom, and for whom? How is diversity and cultural in-between-ness to be celebrated, by whom, and without eroding core identities? Who are to be the gatekeepers, the explainers, the interpreters, the go-betweens, the intellectuals? Who are to be the guardians of propriety and fairness as the recording industry and its superstars sink their teeth into vulnerable local communities? One could continue in this vein, and chose almost any page of the publications mentioned above to illustrate the anxieties at play. They have a long history, from the 1960s to the present day, at least, as the idea of ‘world music’ has taken root in various institutional, public and commercial spaces in the western world – academia, the recording business, public broadcasting, state and municipal arts funding. And whilst I have presented something of a caricature, I think they are serious anxieties, thoughtfully pursued by many of those involved – people I have been in conversation with throughout my years as an ethnomusicologist.

Let me quickly sketch out what I think of as the critical consensus. This will take a little more time, since I think the positions held are more varied, and these variations have a bearing on what I want to say later on. One critical issue relates to the role of the recording industries in shaping (and controlling) musical globalization. This is a complex matter. In its earliest days, the recording companies (The Victor Talking Machine Company, established in 1901, the Gramophone Company, in 1898) marketed a new sound reproduction technology. They did so globally, using local sounds, in local
languages, as a means of developing local markets for their product. Italian opera arias by star vocalists (notably Caruso) constituted the first music to circulate in these markets translocally, supplanted by the dance band orchestras of the 1920s and 30s, as developments in recording allowed. As the recording industries consolidated themselves in subsequent decades, they became the dominant institutional site of global musical exchange, over which they have, consequently, exercised considerable control.

For many, then, questions about musical globalization must necessarily involve a critical and historical analysis of how the recording industries function on a global basis, and how we are to understand the circulation of the commodities they produce. How do they attempt to exploit particular regional and diasporic markets? How have various genres been selected, appropriated and promoted for global circulation? How have they connected their big stars with small sounds? How have recorded sounds been sampled, copied, appropriate, reinvented? How do the activities of local music recording companies selling local music for a global market reproduce, or intensify, the racial or gendered status quo? How do they participate in their own marginalization and dependency on metropolitan markets? And how, finally, was the idea of a ‘World Music’ developed, and why? Was it a key moment in the transformation of the global recording industries as they struggled to orient themselves to, and exploit, the rapidly changing soundscapes of first world cities? Or a comparatively minor chapter in the history of recorded music dreamed up by a bunch of enthusiasts in various areas of commercial and public media to pursue rather more idiosyncratic goals that need to be understood in more local terms? These kind of questions about musical globalization are well-developed within ethnomusicology and popular music studies, tied as they are to

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1 There is a large and valuable literature on this topic. Here I draw on Gronow and Englund 2007.
2 On French recording company Barclay and their efforts to exploit the North African diasporic market and rai, see Schade-Poulsen 1999, Gross et al 2003.
3 The case of tango is particularly well documented. See in particular Savigliano1995.
4 Paul Simon’s appropriation of South African isicathamiya on his 1986 Graceland album is a cause celebre in ethnomusicology. See Meintjes 1990 and Erlmann1999 for different interpretations.
5 Consider, for instance, the lullaby from the Soloman Islands originally recorded Hugo Zemp relocated in the music of Deep Forest and Jan Garbarek, discussed in Feld 2000a, or the complex circulations of Simha Arom and Colin Turnbull’s ‘pygmy’ recordings in the world of western pop and rock (Feld 2000b). See Hesmondhalgh 2000 and Taylor 2003 for other carefully considered case studies.
6 On the gendered dimensions of positioning a local music on a world market, see Aparicio 2000; on racial issues, see, particularly, Meintjes 2003.
7 See Guilbault’s study of Antillean zouk (Guilbault 1993) for a discussion of dependency.
8 A position I would associate, in rather different ways, with Frith 2000 and Schade-Poulsen 1999.
9 Brusila’s 2003 Nordic case study epitomizes this approach.
questions about the recording industry and music's circulation as a commodity in markets.

A second set of critical issues involves how one might conceptualize the relationship between musical globalization and global capitalism. One challenge has been to establish a properly historical framework. Globalization is often held to be a recent, or at least, later twentieth century phenomenon, coinciding roughly with the demise of classical Fordist economies, the information technology revolution, and the emergence of the United States of America as the political superpower after the Cold War. Many, though, think in terms of a much longer timeline, beginning with the fifteenth century voyages of discovery and Europe’s early colonial ventures, establishing political-economic cores and peripheries of extraordinary durability. For early European travelers, missionaries and traders, the music of native South Americans, the music of the Ottoman and, a little later, North Indian courts, were to be understood partly as intellectual challenge (’could this be the music of the Ancient Greeks, or the biblical Hebrews?’), partly as exotic pleasures, and partly as fearsome noise (see Bohlman 1991, Obelkevitch 1977, Farrell 1997). The complex ambivalences, in other words, Said described as Orientalism some time ago (Said 1977), accompanying, justifying, and rendering natural and unchanging an emerging structure of labor and resource exploitation and, finally, the global political dominion of a handful of European colonial powers. Music, a designated space of fantasy in the western imagination, constituted an important domain in which the colonial project took intellectual and cultural shape, its constituent contradictions exposed and explored (Locke 1991). And one reads with fascination about the cross-cultural musicking that seemed to have taken place in the earliest moments of sustained colonization and east-west contact, for instance amongst the British in India or the Dutch in Java, or between the eastern European principalities and the Ottoman court, complex struggles to assimilate and control, as well as communicate across cultural boundaries and maintain elite lines of communication. If globalization is to be understood as the emergence and slow consolidation of European and American hegemony across the planet over half a millennium, the most current episode, one might argue – let’s continue to refer to it as the ‘world music’ moment - either reiterates the same old (colonial) story, or suggests its subtle and persistent powers of self-transformation in a changed media environment.

Many others would find this overly systematic and relentlessly teleological (allowing human culture only one direction and set of historical possibilities). Currently we find ourselves in a radically new environment, yet another argument goes. The nation-state system no longer orders and contains the global flows of finance, labor, commodities and ideas (on which nation-states depend). These circulate according to new logics (footnote: Appadurai’s ‘-scapes’), logics not subordinated to some higher level unifying principle, but which, rather, come together in complex and rather unpredictable ways. Emerging practices of political mobilization and solidarity, new industrial and business practices, new forms violence attempt to gain footholds, win space and consolidate power

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10 This I would associate with Mark Slobin’s *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Slobin 1993)
for new kinds of political and cultural actors in a complexly changing environment, one whose future directions cannot simply be read from the past. And the same might be said of music. If the global circulation of music had, until the relatively recent past, taken place in a space defined by colonialism and its aftermath, in which, for instance, one might look at the world and detect coherent and somewhat bounded British, American, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese spaces of musical encounter and exchange, a colonially or quasi-colonially ordered set of cores and peripheries, the same cannot be said now. Supercultural, subcultural and intercultural musical practices, to use Mark Slobin's useful terms, are now in close and unpredictable contact, thanks to modern media and movements of people. Hip-hop artists on Chicago's South Side sample Balinese gamelan and Abd al-Halim. Australian didjeridus drone along to traditional Irish music in Belfast pubs. Papua New Guineans play Country music when Australian missionaries succeed in banning the music associated with their traditional rituals. And so forth. This is not a situation that can be easily or simply interpreted in terms of cultural imperialism.

A third, and final, set of issues concerns the theorization of the new spaces and places of global musical encounter. Earlier music study was implicitly or explicitly framed by the encompassing nation-state. A more recent ethnomusicology has situated itself on border zones, in 'global cities', along pilgrimage routes and amongst Diasporic communities, in spaces and places that challenge the logic of bounded culture and positively demand attention to multivalent and multi-directional kinds of musical circulation. Multiple to-and-fro movements by migrants in the Mexican/Californian borderlands animate genres such as banda (Simonett 2001). Global cities such as New York might be so defined in terms of their detachment from their national hinterlands, and their relations with regions beyond the nation-state (in New York's case, notably the Caribbean) through the movement of finance, commodities, information, labor, and, of course, music (Allen and Wilken 1998). It is impossible to consider a single Caribbean musical genre (kompas direk, merengue, bachata, zouk; see, respectively, Averill 1997, Austerlitz 1997, Pacini-Hernandez 1995 and Guibault 1993 for English language accounts) without taking into account the musical fissions and fusions that take place in the regional metropolis, and the movements of musicians to and from. Diasporas make a virtue out of a necessity, imagining both the historical facts of their global dispersal as well as the cultural bonds that continue to unite them (no matter how tenuous). In entering into these musical worlds, ethnomusicologists must reckon with the powerful global historical forces that have, usually under violent and coercive conditions, scattered West Africans across the New World, Jews from Baghdad across South-East Asia, North Africans and Turks across North-Western Europe. Their music, as we are now well aware from the work of a number of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, testifies equally powerfully, as Paul Gilroy puts it, to routes and roots (Gilroy 1993). Patient ethnomusicological work enables us to interpret, in these various musical practices, long histories of accommodation and antagonism with host communities, as well as a collective insistence on what is still, over centuries in some cases, palpably shared. Consider the amazingly complex transformation

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12 Bohlman's wide-ranging account of contemporary European pilgrimage practices (Bohlman 1996), for instance, exemplifies a new sensitivity to circulation and spatiality.
of the musics of Western Africa in the Western hemisphere; consider, too, how quickly 'blackness' is recognized in music across the circum-Atlantic, and how mobile African derived musical practices are within this space (see Monson 1999, Eyre 2000).

I have described a number of academic ethnomusicological and anthropological responses to globalization. In what sense do I put this forward as a 'critical consensus', as I announced at the outset? Clearly, even if this characterization of the field is accepted, I am describing major tensions, as well as significant differences in style and emphasis. And the matter is complicated by the fact that I am representing about ten years of ethnomusicological and popular music scholarship, in which ideas have been chewed over and changed, and in which the millennial anxieties that hovered over the topic of globalization ten years ago have somewhat dissipated. Yet, I do find significant areas of consensus. In all of these accounts, globalization is usually presented in terms of radical underlying political-economic transformation, effected primarily through technological change. Systems, in other words, that lie largely beyond human agencies, desires and plans, that force us, human subjects, to reckon with and respond to the enormous changes going on round about us, putting a strain on our cognitive and perceptual apparatus. ‘Culture’ (including music, naturally) is the means by which we do this reckoning, either encouraging us to retrench into fantasies of locality, boundedness and authenticity, or aiding us in our struggle to grasp what these systems—created by us but now, Frankenstein-like, out of our control—are doing to us. Jameson and Harvey hover over these discussions.  

But there is a problem with this. This analysis divides the theoretical space into, roughly a political-economic/technological base and a ‘cultural’ superstructure. The first is a space in which human agency is perceived to be absent, whilst in the latter (only) it is affirmed. This analysis draws on strands of Marxian thinking which characterize modernity in terms of a capitalism that ‘thinks us’, rather than the reverse. As it assumes today’s gargantuan proportions, the strains it imposes on earlier habits of thought increasingly show. But it shares much, ironically, as some critics (notably Tsing 2002) have noted, with a distinctly neo-liberal vision. For neo-liberals, globalization is driven by a spatially expanding and temporally contracting market. The political imperatives defined by this market are understood, in neo-liberal circles, as being by and large benign and a matter of technical/administrative necessity. So both visions, neo-Marxian and neo-liberal, share a view of a global market unfolding according to an inner dynamic that has, at some level, abstracted itself from the domain of the political. And in putting globalization beyond the domain of human agency, they both put it beyond political accountability, dissent and, ultimately, resistance.

What are the alternatives, and what are their implications for music study? Well, one might, instead, conceive of globalization less as a single system, increasingly beyond our conceptual reach and out of our control, and more as a set of projects with cultural and institutional specificity, projects that construct, refer to, dream and fantasize of, in very diverse ways, a ‘world’ as their zone of operation. In this sense, ‘globalization’ is nothing

13 I have in mind, particularly, Harvey 1989 and Jameson 1991.
new, though the current situation affords a greater degree of sophistication and self-consciousness in what we might call 'scalar' thinking – in other words, how we think about the relationship between our 'localities', our 'regions' (plus other intermediary levels), and our 'worlds', and how we make connections between actions and agencies in one level and those in others. Anna Tsing, from whom I derive many of these thoughts, demands our attention to the “located specificity of globalist dreams”, which she sees as multiple, various, and often in competition with one another, but above all produced by people, in specific times, places and institutional sites, acting on the world around them with various kinds of goals, plans, desires and intentions in mind (Tsing 2002).

And this, in turn, pushes me away from questions about musical 'globalization', and towards questions about musical ‘cosmopolitanism’, to the located ambitions, desires and dreams that situate the music we make and listen to in a ‘world’. This is a term, and set of questions and problems, that puts at some distance ways of thinking about global musical processes as a response to, say, the space-time compression of late capitalism. Instead, it invites us to think about how people in specific places and at specific times have embraced the music of others, and how, in doing so, they have enabled music styles and musical ideas, musician and musical instruments to circulate (globally) in particular ways. The shift of emphasis is significant, and, in my view, highly productive. Most importantly, it restores human agencies and creativities to the scene of analysis, and allows us to think of music as a process in the making of ‘worlds’, rather than a passive reaction to global ‘systems’.

As Turino has recently suggested in an important book (Turino 2000), the idea of musical cosmopolitanism can shed a great deal of light on the well-trodden topic of musical nationalism. The two are often held to be in some kind of tension, with nationalists at key moments of nation formation reacting to the negatively perceived ‘cosmopolitanism’ of the immediately preceding period of imperial or colonial rule. And yet, as Turino shows for Zimbabwe, local forms of rock and pop such as chimurenga and (later) jit, vehicles of national, anti-colonial protest, are embedded in thoroughly cosmopolitan histories. It was the cosmopolitan outlook of officials in the Rhodesian Broadcasting corporation in the relatively liberal climate of the 1950s and 1960s that enshrined the music of the Shona mbira (‘thumb piano’) as authentic national culture. It was a later generation of cosmopolitan and well-traveled musicians such as Thomas Mapfumo who blended these sounds with the Congolese guitar styles and vocal protest genres popular across the south of the continent. It takes a musical cosmopolitan, in other words, to develop a musical nationalism, to successfully assert its authenticity in a sea of competing nationalisms and authenticities. Turino and others (see also Regev 2007) see nationalism and cosmopolitanism as mutually constructing and reinforcing processes in a global musical field.

The term is not without its problems, and to illustrate these, I’ll turn to some Middle Eastern examples. What does the Middle Eastern musical field look like, from a cosmopolitan point of view? What kinds of critical distinctions and discriminations do we need to grasp it? Turino’s observations about the cosmopolitan processes that produce national musics actually hold up well in the Middle East. The reforms producing national
art musics across the entire region were driven by people thoroughly trained and schooled in western music. Thus the consolidation of classical repertories and modal theoretical traditions (notably those of dastgah and maqam/makam) proceeded, in the hands of Vaziri, Arel, Darwish, Meshqata and others, according to processes that rested heavily on western (particularly Russian and French) musical epistemologies and methodologies. This was especially so in North Africa, where such efforts took shape under direct colonial tutelage (Davis 2005). The art and folk music one hears today emanating from official state media channels owe much to these efforts. Much less well known is the music such nationalist ideologues produced as composers, reconciling western concert and Middle Eastern art music practice. For various reasons, these never really caught on in either popular or intelligentsia imaginations or listening habits. So one might point in the Middle East to an elite, intelligentsia cosmopolitanism, whose project was one of generating national art and folk musics, and various self-conscious acts of musical syncretism connecting local content with 'universal' and 'modern', i.e. western, techniques. These projects date back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One might also label 'cosmopolitan' a set of popular and rural practices in this period. And here, the term becomes messy. Visiting folklorists, notably Bela Bartok on his Turkish expeditions, taught local national intelligentsias how to search for and identify the oldest and purest archeological 'layers' of folk practice, and to distinguish these from urban accretions and accumulations. In the Turkish case, Bartok was intrigued (and passed on this sense of intrigue and mystique to his Turkish assistants) by a folk musical prehistory that demonstrated connections between the various groups who had migrated towards Europe from Central Asia millennia before. Their music, he argued, was pentatonic, characterized by sweeping melodic descents, and various quirks of vocalization, meter and so forth. Urban influences mediated by local gypsies bothered Bartok immensely, in Anatolia as in Central Europe. Generations of folklorists in Turkey maintain this distrust, deploring the musical cosmopolitanism (read 'Arab influence') of the Anatolian cities and towns, the parasitic gypsies, and the passivity of the peasantry as they allowed their folk heritage to drift away in the collective memory. Religious repertories cultivated across the region amongst Sufi brotherhoods were also labeled cosmopolitan in this negative sense at around this time. They were the product of pilgrimage, slavery (e.g. from Sub-Saharan Africa to the cities on the North African coast), settlement and conquest (e.g. the movements of Turkic and Mongolian tribes from Central Asia to the cities of Ottoman Anatolia, Safavid Iran and Northern India). They were also the product of ways of thinking that connected the Islamic ecumeme, deferring to antique poetic and musical models (qasida, medh, na'at) widely dispersed across the Islamic world, known through pilgrimage and travel. The secular nationalisms of the early twentieth century were to decry this kind of cosmopolitanism emphatically. The closing of the sufi lodges, and the discrediting of their musical traditions was energetically pursued in Turkey, Tunisia, and many other places. So we also need to note popular cosmopolitanisms, historically and spiritually deeply rooted, which fell foul of

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14 See, for English language accounts of these figures, respectively, Nettl 1992, Stokes 1992, Davis 2005, and Scott Marcus' various contributions to Danielson, Marcus and Reynolds 2001.
official state musical policies propagated by the new conservatories and media systems. For those associated with the new states, musical cosmopolitanism was explicitly identified as a problem, to be countered by national educational and media policy.

In addition, one must consider more recent, mass-mediated kinds of musical cosmopolitanism. One has involved musical encounters orchestrated by prominent rock and pop stars in the west: Peter Gabriel, Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, Transglobal Underground, Sting, Natacha Atlas and others (Stokes 2002, Hesmondhalgh 2000, Swedenburg 2001). Though billed as exchanges and fusions, they graft exotic sounds onto a western rock and pop musical infrastructure and as such constitute – in my mind – a musical prolongation of nineteenth century orientalism. Such is our current state of anxiety about the Middle East, so deeply naturalized and unquestioned is western Islamophobia and the fear of Middle Eastern and other Muslim migrants in North America and North Western Europe that the cultural politics of these musical ‘exchanges’ rarely attracts comment, let alone criticism. And Gabriel, Eno, Fripp et al are serious musicians, after all. Most of us are inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt, I guess. We might consider this particular kind of cosmopolitanism, then, as appropriation by musical neo-orientalists for a western market in exotica.

Within the Middle East, another set of cosmopolitan cultural configurations have sprung to life in the wake of neo-liberal transformation. Across the region this has produced burgeoning (but unstable and vulnerable) middle-classes who perceive themselves at a distance from the old nation-state modernizing projects, and search for new means of cultural distinction. To consider Turkey once again, Istanbul’s managers have been proudly – if with decreasing confidence - proclaiming its status as a global city for over a decade (Keyder 1999). The ready availability in CD or online form of digitally re-mastered recordings from forgotten archives of art and folk music has provided these middle classes with new ways of articulating their Turkishness, a Turkishness now imagined as urbane, cosmopolitan, multi-cultural, tolerant of its minorities and (at last) on good terms with its neighbors. This is a vision that the state’s Islamist managers have been able to manipulate, holding traditional and bourgeois sectors together in a fragile accommodation. Istanbul’s multicultural musical heritage (Muslim, Armenian, Greek, Jewish, Balkan) is being energetically rediscovered as the city itself is, to borrow Yang’s term, ‘re-cosmopolitanized’ (Yang 2002). Pop stars like Sezen Aksu and Tarkan, blending a variety of ‘global’ sounds, speak to a younger generation amongst the middle classes attuned not only to this history but a newly confident sense of Turkey’s place in the world.15

Here, too, cosmopolitanism is a contested term. In the drab migrant suburbs and squatter towns that ring this huge city, in what Turkish sociologists sometimes refer to as the ‘other’ Istanbul, an Istanbul oriented to the Anatolian hinterlands and the dwindling redistributive mechanisms of the state, the urban poor regards this cosmopolitan partying with distaste. Theirs is a music – arabesk - associated with migrant lifeways (dress,

15 On Aksu’s cosmopolitanism, recent Turkish popular culture, and Turkey’s neo-liberal moment, see Stokes (forthcoming).
cuisine and so forth) perceived as authentic, but authentic in their rootedness in rural cultures of grief, melancholy and lament. Similar genres took shape across the Middle East and Balkans as migrants left their villages to seek work in their national metropoles in the 1940s and 50s, and in North West European cities in the 1960s and 70s: rai in North Africa; jil in Egypt, Yugoslav turbofolk and so forth. Local intelligentsias love to poor scorn on these musical practices. This is the music of identity crisis, of diseased modernity, of inauthentic emotionality. Like eating lahmacun (a proletarian street snack) and washing it down with whiskey, or so the Turkish intellectuals said, arabesk mixed musical elements (particularly those of supposed Arab derivation) that should not be mixed and had no place in the modern Turkey. But cheap cassette production in the 1970s, and the deregulation of the mass media by liberalizing states meant that these genres proliferated. The intelligentsia looked on with dismay. The musicians involved, though, found themselves in positions of unexpected cultural prominence. So when arabesk star, Orhan Gencebay described himself as a musical cosmopolitan, he was mocked. But he had every right. He had, after all, learned European art music from Russian conservatory trained Crimean refugees in his Black Sea hometown. He had fallen in love with Elvis and the Beatles like most in his generation, and developed his love of jazz and rock and roll in the bands he played in a student and during his military service. His knowledge of Middle Eastern music is extensive, and impatient with the distinctions and discriminations imposed by the conservatories and the radio (Turkish or Arab; folk or classical). So we might think of this, then, as a migrant cosmopolitanism, an oppositional cosmopolitanism ‘from below’, in some regards.

Finally, though this list of critical distinctions is far from complete, what I would label a ‘Diasporic’ cosmopolitanism. For example: the North African states have consistently repudiated, or, at least, downplayed, their Saharan hinterlands in establishing modern national and religious identities. All such acts of repudiation are unstable and incomplete, and the large black populations of North African cities, the descendents of slaves and palace servants, are complex sites of collective fantasy, as well as transmitters of sub-Saharan musical and ritual practices. In gnawa, stambeli, and zar, for instance, Moroccans, Tunisians and Egyptians from a variety of backgrounds (though often women from the poorer classes) meet to the accompaniment of a long-necked lute, esoteric ritual chants and the chatter of the shqashiq (metal castanettes), for the purpose of communication with troublesome spirits and healing (Langlois 1999, Jankowsky 2006, Kapchan 2002). Ritual masters (muallim) develop innovative ways of imagining African Diasporic musical relations, partly extending indigenous ideologies of contact, exchange, and movement (particularly as they involve spirits and saints), and partly reflecting the often long-standing presence in their lives of French and American world music entrepreneurs, musicians and concert organizers.

So you see the problem, I hope. On the one hand, the term cosmopolitanism does useful work for us. It helps us understand the intellectual formations and dispositions of nationalist ideologues and reformers. It points to self-conscious exercises in musical

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16 A point I argue in Stokes (forthcoming), in a chapter reviewing Gencebay’s lengthy and influential career in Turkish arabesk.
exchange and hybridization which have absorbed many in this musical world, and alerts us to the political work they do. It reminds us to take into account the music of Diaspora and migrancy, which we might otherwise ignore, or dismiss, along with local intellectuals, as debased, worthless. In all cases, it alerts us to agencies and cultural energies, to music as an active and engaged means of world making, not simply a response to forces beyond our control. On the other hand, it is a messy term, one that is used and asserted in local struggles for prestige and cultural authenticity. For some, cultural capital; for others, a problem to be dealt with. Like most critical concepts, it is not, in other words, a neat analytical tool.

This being the case, it has become difficult to think of the cosmopolitan as – always and invariably - that benign figure of liberal-enlightenment discourse familiar to us from Kant. Many would now associate cosmopolitanism with acts of acquisitive consumption, and the control of others. Anna Tsing puts the matter sharply: “(p)oor migrants need to fit into the worlds of others; cosmopolitans want more of the world to be theirs.” (Tsing 2002, p. 469). Our task, I think, is to assume neither the one thing, nor the other. We need to distinguish carefully when we are using the idea of musical cosmopolitanism to define, in some analytic sense, attitudes, dispositions and practices that we might not otherwise see clearly from situations in which we need to see how the term is being contested locally, ‘on the ground’. We need to be sensitive to the subtle distinctions and discriminations that any concrete and historical situation of music world-making will generate. We need to be attentive to the different ways people pursue such projects in positions of relative power from those in positions of relative powerlessness. Clearly, it is a term to be used with caution.

To evoke ‘musical cosmopolitanism’ is to evoke a capacity of the musical imagination, and with that word ‘imagination’, certain ideas about the powers, agencies and creativities of human beings at this point in time. We should dwell on this idea a little, since I think globalization, and much of what I have said about cosmopolitanism complicates it. The very facts that prompt us to talk about globalization today, namely cheap digital sound reproduction and the proliferation of small information technologies, deepen the experiential connections between music and the broader sensorium of globalized modernity, particularly the image (still or moving). The idea of ‘the musical imagination’ derives from an age in which ‘absolute’ concert music constituted the cultural ideal, and in which, as Walter Pater once put it, all of the arts ‘aspired to the condition of music’. That age is gone, even though I occasionally think I hear echoes of Pater’s expression in the work of cultural theorists like Paul Gilroy and Iain Chambers. The musical imagination is something we necessarily have to think of in terms of multi-media technology these days, and the broad cultural prioritization of the visual, the image, the spectacle. And yet it begs important questions. Do musical practices travel across the globe in ways unlike, say, literary genres? Or cinema? Or cuisine? Or fashion? Or architectural practices? Or jokes? Do musical cosmopolitans have to account for these differences, these peculiarities?

This is a huge, but interesting, question. So huge, in fact, that it is hard to know where to start. Discussions about the globalization of film, literature, cinema, architecture and
cuisine have usually taken place in discrete disciplinary spaces, involving quite different methods of study and the framing of questions. So comparisons are hard to make. But let me consider the upshot of some recent debates that have run across the pages of the *New Left Review* in recent years concerning the globalization of literary genres. I find them extremely thought provoking. In the first instance, the focus on the novel locates in space and time the movements of a paradigmatically ‘universal’ genre, though one also habitually and exclusively considered in terms of national traditions (the contradiction at play here is, of course, vital). National literatures were formed on the basis of a model created in Germany late in the eighteenth century, Casanova suggests (Casanova 2005). Since then, habits of scholarly thought have essentialized the forms, and assumed their congruence with national and linguistic boundaries. The transnational circulation of literary forms, particularly in translation, has been habitually ignored. These habits of thought, Casanova states bluntly, “screen out the real effects of literary domination and inequality” (2005, p. 78), effects that can only be productively understood from a global perspective.

For ‘domination and inequality’ there certainly is. Casanova’s straw man is Carlos Fuentes, whose contrary suggestion, in his *Geography of the Novel*, goes as follows:

“The old Eurocentrism has been overcome by a polycentrism which... should lead us to an ‘activation of differences’ as the common condition of a central humanity... Goethe’s world literature has finally found its correct meaning: it is the literature of difference, the narration of diversity converging in one world... A single world, with numerous voices. The new constellations that together form the geography of the novel are varied and mutating.”

(Fuentes 1993, cited and translated by Casanova, 2005, p. 88)

When one considers the mediating role of the English language (“English in culture, like the dollar in economics”), the globally near-sovereign role of the Nobel Prize for literature (how many people had heard of Orhan Pamuk before last year, I wonder?), the long history of peripheral and ‘semi-peripheral’ innovations being appropriated and marketed by the centers (Moretti 2003 cites as examples the picaresque, epistolary novels, captivity narratives, melodrama), the crucial role of mediators and influential translators in the centers of political and economic power (Casanova 2005 mentions Hugo’s championing of Scott, Shaw’s of Ibsen, Gide’s of Taha Hussein), such a benign view of literary globalization is hard to sustain. The circulation of texts in the literary world would seem to work relentlessly to maintain its centers of power and influence, its dependent peripheries and its zones of mediation.

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17 The debate has involved, most conspicuously, Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova, Christopher Prendergast, Efrain Kristal, Francesca Orsini, Jonathan Arac, Emily Apter and Jale Parla. I refer here, specifically, to Moretti 2003 and 2006, and to Casanova 2005, mainly for manageability of reference, but also because I think they sum up the main outlines of the discussion, at least for my purposes here.
This raises, thirdly, the matter of how one might relate the literary map of centers, peripheries, semi-peripheries and sub-systems to the political and economic domain. Here, the main protagonists of the discussion have been emphatic: there is no simple, one-to-one relationship, at least, at the level of detail. Thus, the mobility of French narrative in the later nineteenth century, of German tragedy in the early eighteenth century, of the Petrarchan sonnet in the late sixteenth century, owe little to the political and economic power of France, Germany and Italy at these particular moments. Quite the reverse. Though quickly co-opted by the centers, semi-peripheries (Russia, Ireland, America) have been important sites of formal innovation. Literary sub-systems, like Latin-America, constitute an exception, with powerful dynamics all of their own, never entirely co-opted and appropriated by the core (for all the power of, for instance, the Nobel committee in this regard). Casanova suggests we think, then, in terms of world literature as a ‘structure’ rather than a ‘system’, the latter implying directly interactive relationships between each element, which reinstate the hierarchy at each turn. The former, which she prefers, permits zones of relative autonomy within a global field of literary relationships.

This debate is full of provocations peculiar to the world of comparative literature studies not all of which need preoccupy us here. And I certainly don’t want to suggest that (as often is the case, and not necessarily detrimentally) musicologists should feel the need to follow the fashions of literary theory in this instance. Quite the reverse: literature studies have been slow out of the gate on the matter of globalization. Literary critical habits of close reading have inhibited efforts to conceptualize broader patterns of movement, circulation, distribution. But there are things we might ponder. Ethnomusicological accounts of globalization have tended to focus on the circulation of African musics around the Atlantic, and a few other paradigmatic cases of musical migrancy (notably rai, on which there is a quite a large literature). In other words, a popular and vernacular field of music-making. How to integrate ‘historical musicology’, i.e. those traditions of studies devoted to western art music into a broader account of globalization? What of the globalization of the symphony, the sonata, the opera and the oratorio? Historical musicology has seldom – to the best of my knowledge – embraced the challenge of thinking of canonical items of repertory and paradigmatic historical turning points outside their national domain and in a more global context.

We might also ponder, with our literary colleagues, how language affects the global circulation of musical genres, and how we might think about music in a global field of translation. The enormous commerce in literary translations across and beyond Europe has been invisible to literary scholars until relatively recently. The picture at the moment seems to be that they connect centers and peripheries, and only rarely peripheries with one another. The musical picture looks very similar. The concerto form in the Middle

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18 Moretti (who thinks ‘close reading’ is a problem in this regard) and Prendergast (who thinks it is indispensable) clash sharply on this issue.
19 I should quickly register the exceptions, at least, those known to me, notably in colonial Latin America (an emergent and important area of study in the hands of scholars such as Drew Davies and Bernardo Illari) and the British raj (see Woodfield 2000).
East (to think of Ferid Alnar’s Kanun Concerto and Aziz al-Shawan’s Piano Concerto, roughly contemporary mid twentieth century compositions from Turkey and Egypt respectively) is the result of parallel orientations to Europe, and not to one another. Tango circulated around the world as a result firstly of its being adopted in Paris, in the early years of the twentieth century, and, later, as sentimental song via Carlos Gardel and Hollywood. Colonization constituted an important field of musical translation, circulating sounds from the colonial peripheries via the colonial metropolis. A fascination with Hawaiian music (and the ‘Hawaiian’ guitar) accompanied the Japanese (and the powerful Japanese recording industry) in their early twentieth-century colonizations and occupations, imparting a distinctly Hawaiian sound to the textures of Javanese kroncong, a popular genre actually connected in the minds of most Indonesians today with urban life under Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule.20

The idea that the movement of translations is structured by colonial or neo-colonial fields of power, moving from peripheries to centers and from there to other peripheries, will probably not surprise most ethnomusicologists (if by ‘translations’ we are to understand various kinds of overt ‘versionizing’ or appropriation). But one can pursue the issue of translation further. Recent literary theory is currently questioning a variety of assumptions about the ontological primacy of ‘originals’ considered in a field of translations. In a global market, originals may be produced with translation in mind, and thus, in a sense, already be ‘translated’ at the point of origin.21 And translations not only live their own life, but impinge on the way the ‘originals’ are read and understood. Literary translations are not simply ‘versions of’ an original set of meanings, then, but in dialogue with them.

Might one consider the circulation of musical genres in a similar light? The global translatable of tango, as sentimental song in the 1920s and 30s would be a well-studied case in point (Savigliano 1991, Taylor 1998, Collier 1986). They were, it would seem, particularly resonant in societies also experiencing modernity in terms of pain, dislocation and melancholy, also exploring populist modernisms. But these tango ‘translations’ became entangled with the lives of the Argentine originals in powerful and destabilizing ways. Marta Savigliano hints at the ways in which the global circulation of tango impacted on processes underway in Argentina, where elites were seeking ways of

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20 I am grateful to Dave Novak for this observation.
21 One would often hear Orhan Pamuk criticized in exactly these terms in Turkey, about ten years ago, when his growing reputation in Europe was beginning to be noticed: it was written, one would hear, with an eye and ear to translation, and with ‘foreigners’ predispositions towards Turkey in mind, and thus is not really ‘Turkish’ literature. This is not, actually, a good example of what I am trying to describe. Pamuk’s Turkish literary antecedents are easy to establish (Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar and many others spring to mind), and the critique implied is small minded, at least from a literary point of view. But it does touch on an important issue. For somebody from the periphery attempting to establish credentials in the literary center, the question of translation must be built into the enterprise from the outset. The translation, in a sense, precedes the original.
subordinating its more overt African elements (particularly alive, she suggests in its
danced forms), and orienting it towards bourgeois rather than subaltern pleasures. One
can think of other examples and explore the idea of musical translation in different ways,
of course. But the idea that we might keep broader, global, structures of circulation in
mind when considering versions and copies in specific local fields is, I think, an
important one, one that can be extended far beyond the African diaspora, where it does
have some critical purchase (note, in particular Feld 2000b).

We might also learn something about the practices of musical cosmopolitanism if we
were to take more note of dance. Somewhere along the line, the study of dance was
relegated to the byways of academic musicology. Academic ethnomusicology, to its
shame, has compounded the problem, confining the study of dance to special interest
groups in its professional organizations, and leaving dance scholars to sink or swim. The
question of globalization (or, as I am rephrasing it, ‘musical cosmopolitanism’) is one
that should, in my emphatic view, push dance issues back to the center of things. For in
dance we see, with a certain amount of clarity, something that should also (but often
doesn’t) give us pause for thought when we think about musical circulation. This is the
circulation of dance practices (and the music attached to them) across cultural boundaries
where many other things come abruptly to a halt. Consider, briefly, the quadrille and the
polka in this regard. There are some obvious vectors of transmission, in both cases. The
quadrille, a dance involving geometrical figures and small groups, traveled with colonial
elites in the New World during the eighteenth century when it was fashionable in
Western Europe. From there, it radiated across colonial space, assuming subtly different
meanings and attaching itself to diverse performance styles (though, interestingly,
broadly similar musical forms) amongst African slaves and their descendents (kompa
direk in Haiti, Averill 1997), amongst creole elites (merengue, Austerlitz 1997), and
amongst colonized indigenous populations (matachines, Rodriguez 1996). The polka, a
broadly shared central European couple dance practice, was adopted by western
European elites and then popular classes; with Central European settlement in North
America it found a new home as a popular practice in the Great Lakes region, and in
areas of intense Mexican/German interaction in parts of Texas and north-western Mexico
(Simonett 2001). A very great many of this continent’s popular music styles owe their
current shape and form to one or another of these dance practices.

In both cases, what strikes me is, firstly, how rapidly dance forms travel, and how
unobtrusively, yet systematically, musical styles are attached. As ethnomusicologists
thinking about musical globalization we miss out on a great deal, it seems to me, when
we ignore dance. (I see no end to this unfortunate tendency of ours.) And, secondly, I’m
struck by the somewhat limited nature of explanations that would interpret the
hemispheric spread of quadrilles and polkas, for instance, purely in terms of empire,
colonization, migration, settlement and so forth. Obviously, these dances were learned
and transmitted under these particular and specific historical and political conditions. But
why so quickly, and so deeply? And why with such facility over such intense lines of
antagonism and conflict? Could music and dance move, I find myself wondering,
according to an interior logic, and not, simply, the logic of social movement and politics?
Could it be that danced or musical form gets picked up by another society simply because
of a human fascination for the diversity of form, particularly forms that embody or index satisfying and pleasurable social processes? Or society-constituting contradictions (e.g. as Jane Cowan suggests, the ‘look at me/don’t look at me’ that constitutes female subjectivities in rural Greek dance; Cowan 1990)? Don’t these kinds of thing also draw us to ‘other’ music and dance, more often, perhaps, than the pursuit of distinction (though we frequently use music and dance for such purposes), or of identity (ditto)?

One would need to find the right language here, obviously. But this formulation, clumsy though it is, opens the door to some quite challenging, and, to the best of my knowledge, hitherto unasked, questions. How are ‘forms embodying or indexing satisfying and pleasurable social processes’ identified as such across cultural boundaries? How they are broken down into grammatical elements and quickly learnable and transmissible units? How do they connect with submerged or, perhaps, repressed (because deemed childish, or sexually ambivalent) repertoires of pleasure and playfulness in the host society? According to what social processes are they sanctioned, or tolerated, or located as intense (if, possibly, shameful) social pleasures? Such questions quickly suggest themselves when we contemplate the global spread of dance styles, from the quadrille and the polka to the tango and the Macarena (and for a Middle Eastern angle, consider ‘belly dancing’, raqs sharqi). These dances are attached to musical styles that travel with them and are co-constituent of the bodily practices involved. But similar questions might be raised of a host of globally traveling musical techniques, that we might also consider as kinds of mobile embodiment: west African bell-patterns, African American and Afro-Caribbean riffing and rapping, solo modal (maqam) improvisation in the Balkans, Mediterranean and Middle East, the timbre-rich droning of Australian aboriginal music, the colotomic (phrase marking) practices of Javanese gamelan, the vocal breaks and yodeling of American Country music, Anglo-Celtic jigging and reeling. The list could be extended.

To conclude: musical cosmopolitans create musical worlds and new musical languages, but they do so within systems of circulation that determine to a large extent what is available to them and how (and in which direction) musical elements move. Musical cosmopolitanism may well be understood, in the light of the observations above, as the product of certain kinds of intentionality and agency, which we might appropriately understand politically and culturally. But to neglect the element of pleasure and play in the global circulation of musical practice would, it seems to me, also be to make a serious mistake. If we were to embrace these elements more fully, we might extend our understanding of ‘the political’ and ‘the cultural’ in useful and interesting ways. And, more narrowly, we might gain fresh angles on ‘world music’, and the processes and practices of musical cosmopolitanism.


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