Introduction

Music and Cultures of Racial Representation in the Nineteenth Century

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> [When] the word race, as applied to man, is spoken of, the English mind wanders immediately to distant countries; to Negroes and Hottentots, Red Indians and savages.[1] (1850)

> It is our hope that the musicologies might rise … to the occasion and find their way in the emerging national and international conversation on race, for it is in music that the racial resonates most vividly, with greatest affect and power.[2] (2000)

To invoke the concept of race in a twenty-first-century publication is to stir up a hornet's nest. Sociologists and anthropologists such as Michael Banton and Robert Miles have urged the abandonment of the term, since it stabilizes and fixes identities within a scientific and ideological discourse that has conceptualized race for purposes of domination.[3] But insofar as the term also represents the lived experience of people, that necessitates a redefinition of race along the lines of a cultural production rather than a biologically determined essence. This process of redefinition enables scholars to engage with the concept without evoking accusations of racist thinking. Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, for instance, in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, present a framework for the discussion of the intersections between music and race, dialectically posing Self against Other as questions of 'understandability, belonging, and ownership', all of which are encapsulated as forms of identity.[4] According to their arguments, mapping music onto race may well lead to stereotype and prejudice, but it can also result in hybridization and can destabilize domination. Historically, race enabled access for Europeans to the Other, the foreign and distant, and music became a privileged vehicle for this contact, to the extent that the prevailing Western concept of music as 'universal' facilitated the classification of all musics and the concomitant racialized denigration of the musics of non-Western Others.

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1 Robert Knox, *The Races of Men* (Philadelphia, 1850), 3.

2 Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, eds, 'Introduction', *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago, 2000), 6.

3 Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge, 1998), and Robert Miles, *Racism* (London, 2003). See also Rohit Barot and John Bird, 'Racialization: The Genealogy and Critique of a Concept', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24/4 (Jul. 2001): 601–18.

4 Radano and Bohlman, 'Introduction', *Music and the Racial Imagination*, 6.

Nineteenth-Century Music Review, 3/1(2006): ix–xiii.

One prominent facet of the historically racist discourse that Radano and Bohlman, and many others, seek to explain, is its theoretical basis in scientific discourse. In the Western mind of the later nineteenth century, race, as a set of biologically determined categories for human beings, was an ever present, though not always conscious, consideration, and as evolutionary thought permeated the intellectual thinking of the period, European and North American anthropologists and ethnologists situated ethnic Others within an increasingly Darwinian or Spencerian racial framework. Thus, the emerging discourse around race became a convenient means of affirming Self by stabilizing and fixing the identities of the Others. In particular, Darwinism came to shape representations of the colonized,[5] helping to accomplish the cultural work of 'the construction of nation and ethnic group in Europe' at the expense of the racial Others,[6] which included not only non-Europeans, but also Jews and Roma. Noted scholars and writers such as Comte Arthur de Gobineau, Herbert Spencer and Matthew Arnold contributed to this ideological formulation of race through published academic works, reports in the press, representations in the arts (novels, artworks and performances) and even exhibits of amusement parks. Within these formulations, racist stereotyping and taxonomy seemed to cross social or cultural groupings. The Jew, for example, had a particularly long tenure, serving as the 'stranger in our midst', yet so pervasive was racist discourse of the period that newly forming ideologies blended Jews with Arabs and African-Americans, with all groups receiving literary and pictorial representation as dark-skinned peoples. Racial identity was also conscribed in the service of nation-building, often establishing the boundaries through or against which nations defined themselves.

Because of this taxonomic blurring, questions inevitably remain about what identifies, delimits and defines racial type and its impact in the late nineteenth century. How did race penetrate cultural discourse and practice to such an extent on the one hand, and how did it, on the other, assist the cause of nation and empire? Did racial thought always serve the purpose of domination? Did scholarly discourse in any way counteract or contradict prevailing stereotypes? And were racial Others able to possess any agency over representations of themselves? Lastly, and of essential critical significance, what part does Orientalism play in the overarching conceptualization upon which many of these issues are predicated? Race, as a conceptual foundation of Orientalism, has only recently begun to receive critical scrutiny.[7] Early efforts in this direction can be found in the problematizing operatic criticism of Ralph Locke and Edward Said,[8] as well

5 See, for example, Jane R. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin* (London, 2002).

6 Philip Bohlman, 'The Remembrance of Things Past: Music, Race, and the End of History in Modern Europe', in Radano and Bohlman, eds, *Music and the Racial Imagination*, 647.

7 For example, in the essay collection *Music and German National Identity* (ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, Chicago, 2002), issues of race only emerge in the context of Third-Reich musical politics. See also Doris L. Bergen, 'Hosanna or "Hilf, O Herr Uns": National Identity, the German Christian Movement, and the "Dejudaization" of Sacred Music in the Third Reich', in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Applegate and Potter, 140–54. However, by situating the anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century, as well as issues of colonization and the rise of comparative musicology, within musical practices, we can identify a nexus of music, national identity and race that contributed to the formation of the German nation.

8 See for example Ralph Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental "Other": Saint-Saëns's

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as Bohlman's detailed explorations of anti-Semitism,[9] The present special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* attempts to redress some of these lacunae in the literature, by surveying a wide geographical, conceptual and chronological field within the long nineteenth century to provide alternative readings of Orientalism and racism variously in musical literature including Liszt's *Des Bohémiens*; in compositions such as Verdi's *Aida* and Sousa's 'The Red Man'; and in anthropological writings concerning Gypsies, Ethiopians, native Americans and other peoples considered to be savages or primitives.

Given the extent and diversity of such questions, it is essential to lay a theoretical groundwork, as is provided in the surveys of ideas on race made by Derek Scott and Bennett Zon and in Ralph Locke's readings of race and empire in *Aida*. Showing how *Aida* has been interpreted anywhere from being a straightforward historical narrative to serving as a metaphor for the abuse of power, Locke discusses the attribution of varying degrees and directions of political, national and racial meanings as fluid categories of identity, decoding modern Orientalist theories of Said, amongst others, as well as contemporary anthropological hermeneutics of the period. Similarly, Michael Pisani's analysis of Indianist elements in John Philip Sousa's orchestral movement 'The Red Man' provides a close reading of music works, engaging dialogically with narrative and context in order to uncover underlying power tensions between nations, social classes and ethnic groups. In this regard, then, Pisani attempts to unpack the construction of problematic cultural (mis)representations in relation to Sousa's suite *Dwellers in the Western World*, where the composer reflects the liberal 'desire to demonstrate that the United States in 1911 was recognizably multi-racial'.[10] By extension, Pisani portrays 'The Red Man' as drawn from recognizable Indianist musical themes and gestures, as filmmakers did throughout the twentieth century, playing to the USA's imperialist, expansionist reality and to audience expectations by using cultural indexing to reference 'the vanishing race'.[11] Thus for Sousa's audience, the issue at stake was twofold: while pressing a strongly encoded political narrative, it excited 'curiosity about identities lost and cultures erased'.[12]

This political analysis, not surprisingly, crosses geographical boundaries, particulary in my work and Scott's. As I imply, Sousa as Pisani interprets him parallels the *Völkerschauen* of late nineteenth-century Austria, whereby the Hapsburgs likewise hoped to highlight the multi-cultural and pluralistic character of its empire.[13] In an exploration of how African-Americans represented

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*Samson et Dal*ila', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/3 (1991): 261–302; 'Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East', in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston, 1998), 104–36; and 'Exoticism and Orientalism in Music: Problems for the Worldly Critic', in *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*, ed. Paul A. Bové (Durham, 2000), 257–81 and Edward Said, 'The Empire at Work: Verdi's Aida', in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 111–32.

9 See Philip Bohlman, *Jüdische Musik: Eine mitteleuropäische Geistesgeschichte* (Vienna, 2005).

10 Michael V. Pisani, 'John Philip Sousa's "Red Indians": A Case Study of Race in Music', this volume, 78.

11 Ibid., 88.

12 Ibid., 88.

13 The *Völkerschauen* of central Europe in the late nineteenth century were exhibitions of living 'exotic' peoples, whereby whole African villages were transported to museum or amusement-park settings for the observation of visitors. One of the best known was the Ashanti- or Somali-Dorf in Venedig in Wien during the mid-1890s.

themselves and their musical cultures in performances before European, and in particular Viennese, audiences, I reveal how performances of the cakewalk participated in discourses of national identity and modernism in a European (that is, non-American) context, showing that it was in Europe that the African-Americans were able to find the support and approval they could not obtain in their homeland. In contrast, Derek Scott explores the especially problematic ways in which racial theories evoked socially deprecatory constructions in England.[14] Thus, in 1891 Gilbert Webb felt that he could classify racial distinction through folk music, whereby the Celts came to rate poorly in comparison to the English. Matthew Arnold developed an even more troublesome reading of Celtic musical culture, which unfairly contrasted it with German music as the product of the 'dreamy Celt' as opposed to the 'earth-bound Saxon'.[15] Bennett Zon considers the impact of racial identification in an alternative theoretical framework, focusing on its resistance within the rising discipline of British ethnomusicology as an antidote to engrained Orientalist anthropology. Starting with William Jones in the late eighteenth century, Zon shows how, by the beginning of the twentieth century, ethnomusicology shed the mantle of racist musicology, and accepted ethnic difference through scientific observation, experimentation, fieldwork and self-reflexivity. As Zon notes, 'by achieving parity of cultural identity … the Western Orientalist presumptions of Eastern inferiority could by the end of the nineteenth century be subsumed into increasingly equalizing racial discourses'.[16] This cultural reading of racial difference through what would later be called cultural adaptationism avoided the trap of biological determinism, drawing attention instead to individual differences between human beings.

As Locke, Pisani and I suggest, musical subjects speak out of their own culture and experience rather than through (mis)representations by a politically hegemonic culture. The authors subject the concept of race as biologically determined identity and not just cultural construction to well-deserved criticism, indicating that home audiences were actually eager to see the 'real thing' as opposed to parodied imitations. In this late nineteenth-century context, race reclaims itself in the bodies of the Others, who resist the effects of racism, taking agency over representations of themselves, and ultimately exerting a lasting impact upon European culture. Although not ostensibly Orientalist in character, these, and other examples of Scott and Zon, illustrate how Said's failure to allow for reciprocity between subject and object, between colonizer and colonized, does not withstand closer scrutiny for specific cases of such racial relationships. As my article reveals, for example, the African-Americans received substantial financial reward and popular acclaim, while the Austrians satisfied their curiosity and were entertained. They even enjoyed seeing images of themselves on stage, when a group such as the Four Black Diamonds donned Tyrolean *Tracht* and performed sets of Austrian songs, to thunderous applause. Stuart Hall observed that 'it is one thing to position a set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse – it is quite another thing to subject them to that "knowledge", not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective

14 See, for example, David Arnold, 'Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Nineteenth-Century India', *Historical Research* 77/196 (May 2004): 267.

15 Derek Scott, 'In Search of Genetically Modified Music: Race and Musical Style in the Nineteenth Century', this volume, 3–23.

16 Bennett Zon, 'Disorienting Race: Humanizing the Musical Savage and the Rise of British Ethnomusicology', this volume, 25–43.

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conformation to the norm.'[17] It is in the spirit of uncovering these 'subjective conformations to the norm' and attempting to explain the 'inner compulsions' behind them that we offer this collection of studies to the readers of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*.

17 Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', quoted in bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, 1992), 3.

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