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To cite this article: Ralph P. Locke (2008) Doing the Impossible: On the Musically Exotic, Journal of Musicological Research, 27:4, 334-358, DOI: [10.1080/01411890802384375](https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890802384375)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411890802384375>



Published online: 20 Oct 2008.



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DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE: ON THE MUSICALLY EXOTIC

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Music is a problematic medium in which to carry out representations or evocations of exotic lands and cultures. The present article explores the limits of applying to music the kinds of observations that are generally made about literary representations of the exotic (as in a statement by Stendhal) or about exoticist paintings (such as Le bain turc, by Ingres). It also reflects on the function of early museums devoted to natural history and foreign cultures

Despite music's inaptness for representing objects (such as a Japanese teacup), musical exoticism exists, proliferates in concert life, and is constantly being carried out in new works and in new performances and productions of older ones. This paradox is resolved—the impossible becomes possible—through two different means: 1) the music echoes or imitates certain (real or imagined) aspects of the music of the exotic culture; or 2) the music allies itself with words, visual images, stage action, and other extra-musical features.

The resulting works more often than not have a tenuous relationship to the distant locale that is purportedly being portrayed. But the works can be immensely revelatory about the passions, yearnings, and

In my forthcoming book, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), I propose a broad paradigm for understanding a wide range of exotic portrayals *per musica*, one that takes more actively into consideration than is customarily done the heavily exoticizing contexts for which the music was composed. Among the most important of such contexts are literary and dramatic ones that are themselves part of the work (in, say, an opera or film), the printed preface or movement titles for a programmatic instrumental work (such as Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*), and the cultural stereotypes that may lie behind other overtly exotic works (Mozart's *Rondo alla turca*, Liszt's "Gypsy"-style *Hungarian Rhapsodies*).

This article relates to, but is mostly independent of, that book (*Musical Exoticism*). I decided to remove the essay and publish it separately because, though it is phrased in terms of musical exoticism, it reaches well beyond that topic to some basic issues of meaning in music that I feel have often been inadequately understood. The essay first appeared, in abbreviated form and in French translation (by Vincent Giroud), as "L'impossible possibilité de l'exotisme musical," in *Musique, esthétique et société en France au XIXe siècle: Liber amicorum Joël-Marie Fauquet*, ed. Damien Colas, Florence Gétéreau, and Malou Haine (Liège: Mardaga, 2007), 91–107.

anxieties of the culture that produced and, originally, received them—and of the music-loving communities that revive and receive the works today.

PARADOXICAL, INESSENTIAL, IMPOSSIBLE

In most writings from a century ago or from last year, phrases such as “musical exoticism” or “the exotic in music” refer primarily to matters of style: the particular collections of devices (scales, rhythmic figures, pedal points, instrumental combinations, and so on) that composers have long used when seeking to indicate one or another exotic locale or people.¹

This emphasis on quasi-semiotic musical markers of place has been immensely productive. Dialects of musical exoticism have been named, catalogued, and studied. Among the dialects that occur most widely and that have been most extensively explored are *alla turca* (e.g., in Mozart), Hungarian-Gypsy conventions (in Schubert, Liszt, Brahms), Hispanic flourishes (Bizet, Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel, Bernstein), Middle Easternisms (Verdi, Saint-Saëns, Balakirev), gamelan-like procedures (Debussy, Poulenc, McPhee, Britten, Lou Harrison), and South or and East Asian evocations (Puccini, Messiaen, Richard Rodgers, Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and—if exoticism is possible in works by a composer from the part of the world being portrayed—Takemitsu and Tan Dun).

Particular attention has been given, decade after decade, to the question “How authentic (well informed, etc.) are these borrowings or imitations?” Indeed, this long-traditional interest in degrees of authenticity seems to have increased recently, perhaps as a result of the West’s growing familiarity with, and deepening respect for, various non-Western traditions. Eric Rice points out, as nobody before him had taken the trouble to do, the precise resemblances between Mozart’s *Rondo alla turca* and Janissary musical practices.² Thomas Cooper, in his extensive overview of nineteenth-century French opera, argues that Bizet’s *Carmen* “is not ‘authentically Spanish’ in any sense” because (he claims, erroneously) Bizet

¹By “exotic locale or people,” I mean one that was, in the work’s own day, perceived by the composer and his or her intended listeners as being distant and different from the society in which they themselves lived, and whose musical traditions differed significantly—or were imagined as differing significantly—from the genres, works, and styles that the composer and listeners considered normative.

²Eric Rice, “Representations of Janissary Music (*Mehter*) as Musical Exoticism in Western Compositions, 1670–1824,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 19 (1999), 41–88. The Janissary bands were suppressed by the Ottoman Sultan in the late 1820s. Rice relies necessarily on fragmentary surviving verbal descriptions and a few musical examples notated by Turks or traveling Europeans.

“consciously avoided direct quotation” of Spanish tunes.³ Michele Girardi, in his book on Puccini’s operas, aims for quantitative precision. He calculates that 45 percent of the measures in Act 1 of *Madama Butterfly* display direct borrowings of Japanese tunes or other notably Japanese-sounding elements (such as heavily pentatonic writing and brittle sonorities involving harp and high winds).⁴ Girardi’s statistics confirm something that critics and operagoers have long sensed: namely, that *Madama Butterfly* is drenched to an unusual degree in local color of the musical kind (as well as visual-dramatic markers, such as kimonos and Japanese religious symbols). But Girardi leaves largely undiscussed the remaining 55 percent of Act 1, even though many passages within those sections do characterize, though by musical means that do not “sound Japanese,” Japan and its inhabitants.⁵

This primary and sometimes near-exclusive emphasis on the “authentic” sources of exotic styles has been challenged in recent years by musicologists from diverse scholarly backgrounds. Jonathan Bellman, Matthew Head, and Jean-Pierre Bartoli, among the most notable, all helpfully emphasize the conventionality (or inventedness) of exotic styles.⁶ This seems to me a major step forward: It appreciates how much Western

³Thomas Cooper, “Nineteenth-Century Spectacle,” in *French Music Since Berlioz*, ed. Richard Langham Smith and Caroline Potter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 29. Bizet used whole tunes and phrases (e.g., songs by Iradier and García) quite recognizably in *Carmen*. Indeed, Bizet himself in a footnote in the original piano-vocal score acknowledged using the Iradier song. True, Bizet adapted the songs significantly. (Perhaps Cooper is taking “direct” to mean “exact, unchanged”? If so, the statement is not so much mistaken as inadvertently misleading.) The various borrowings and alterations were identified in print decades ago—and ably, if incompletely, discussed—by such scholars as Julien Tiersot, Raoul Laparra, Edgar Istel, and Winton Dean. The relationship between the García song and the *entr’acte* to Act 4 is further explored, as is a possible relationship between the words of the Iradier song and the Séguedille, in my “Spanish Local Color in Bizet’s *Carmen*: Unexplored Borrowings and Transformations,” in *Stage Music and Cultural Transfer: Paris 1830 to 1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). Another recent example is Valerie Errante, “Brahms Civilizes the Gypsy: The *Zigeunerlieder* and Their Sources,” *Pendragon Review* 2/1 (Fall 2003), 46–73.

⁴Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 211–17.

⁵I discuss three such nonexotic-sounding passages (including one from Act 2) and their implications for the audience’s perception of “the Japanese” in “A Broader View of Musical Exoticism,” *Journal of Musicology* 24/4 (Fall 2007), 488, 511–19; and *Musical Exoticism*, chapter 8.

⁶Jonathan Bellman, *The style hongrois in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), and his Introduction to *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), ix–xiii; Matthew Head, *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart’s Turkish Music* (London: Royal Musical Association, 2000); and Jean-Pierre Bartoli, “Propositions pour une définition de l’exotisme musical et pour l’application en musique de la notion d’isotopie sémantique,” *Musurgia* 7/2 (2000), 61–71. I discuss Bellman’s and Bartoli’s definitions of musical exoticism (and Thomas Betzwieser’s) in *Musical Exoticism*, chapter 3.

high culture has constructed the very thing that it seems to be merely depicting. Yet, in a different way, these scholars still continue the tradition of focusing primarily on passages that “sound exotic.”⁷ As a result, the methods of the “conventionalists”—like those of the seekers of “authenticity”—tend to be most valid for instrumental works, or else, in the case of operas, set in exotic locales, for strikingly foreign- or unusual-sounding numbers (such as choruses, diegetic songs, and marches or other scene-setting processions).⁸ The methods of both groups of scholars are thus largely unable to address exotic portrayals that do not (to a Westerner) sound exotic—such as Baroque portrayals of Eastern tyrants or (again) large chunks of *Madama Butterfly* Act 1.

The inherent limitations in so many classic and current discussions of musical exoticism led me to put together the present essay, which attempts to lay the groundwork for a way of understanding musical exoticism in more of its facets. It also opens the way to discussing many instances of musical exoticism that have been systematically excluded from discussions of musical exoticism simply because they rarely if ever “sound exotic.”⁹

Musical exoticism is problematic—and rich—because it is a form of representation (or evocation)—by musical and other means—of a cultural Other: that is, of a social group, nation, or region other than one’s own. Questions have traditionally been raised about music’s representational capacity in general: the ability of any and all music to denote or “tell” non-musical aspects of life and the world, whether feelings or political messages, stories or visual and verbal images.¹⁰ Stravinsky famously declared: “Music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological

⁷To use a term that I propose in “Broader View” and in the preface and chapter 3 of *Musical Exoticism*, the “authenticists” (e.g., Rice, Cooper, and Girardi) and the “conventionalists” (Bellman, Head, and Bartoli) employ two somewhat different versions of the “Exotic Style Only” Paradigm of musical exoticism.

⁸By “diegetic” song (a term common among scholars of film music), I mean a song that the character knows that he or she is singing, that would be sung if this were an otherwise mainly spoken drama, and that the other characters on stage hear *as a song*.

⁹In *Musical Exoticism*, I call this broader approach the “All the Music in Full Context” Paradigm. I discuss portrayals of non-Western tyrants by Handel and Rameau in *Musical Exoticism*, chapter 5, and in “Broader View,” 494–506.

¹⁰Among many recent writings of interest, see Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Richard Will, *The Characteristic Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). I sketch out some of the basic options in the entries on “Absolute Music,” “Program Music,” “Program Symphony,” and “Symphonic Poem” in *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., ed. Don Michael Randel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1, 680–83, 854–56.

mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc.”¹¹ Stravinsky’s radical view of the autonomy of musical language and the musical work, a view held consciously or unconsciously by many composers, critics, and scholars in his day and ever since, would make musical exoticism inherently paradoxical: at worst an impossibility or at best (to continue to quote Stravinsky about musical depiction or representation) “an illusion” that is “not to be confused with [music’s] essential being.”¹²

In order to make clear why musical exoticism often appears so problematic, it helps to take a step back and think about some issues regarding exotic attitudes generally within Western society, and only thereafter consider how these can and cannot be adequately conveyed by music, with all its limitations, and all its remarkable expressive and associative powers.

ON FOREIGN “CURIOSITIES”: STENDHAL AS GUIDE?

I will start by pondering a remark of Stendhal’s from 1837 that was promoted by a noted scholar of musical exoticism as a typical and revealing “definition of [nineteenth-century cultural] exoticism” from the period itself.¹³ This scholar, the late Dorothy Veinus Hagan, was no doubt drawn to the remark because it is keenly observed and memorably phrased: “For

¹¹Igor Stravinsky [co-authored with Walter Nouvel], *An Autobiography* [1936] (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 53–54. See also Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* [1962] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 101–3.

¹²Richard Taruskin sets a good new precedent in discussing, in some detail, the exotic cultural overtones of major works by Chopin, Gottschalk, Bizet, Massenet, and others. See his *A History of Western Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), vol. 3: 192–3, 343–9, 357–65, 375–410, 667–68, 752–53, 767, 786–87; vol. 4: 106–11, 454. Two recent textbooks devote a helpful “in context” essay to musical exoticism, though (not surprisingly) phrased heavily in terms of exotic style (“the musical attraction of ‘the Other’”): J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 682; and Barbara Russano Hanning, *A Concise History of Western Music*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 466–67.

¹³The three quoted words come from late Dorothy V. Hagan’s important study, *French Musical Criticism Between the Revolutions, 1830–1848* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1965), 312. Stendhal was roughly contemporaneous with some interesting and important instances of musical exoticism: e.g., Beethoven’s Turkish March from *Die Ruinen von Athen* (The Ruins of Athens, 1811); Franz Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1830–50s); and (Hagan’s immediate topic) Félicien David’s pathbreaking and in its day widely performed *Le désert* (1844). Hagan also implies that Stendhal’s definition was so well known—it is unclear whether or not she imagines that he himself invented it—that at least one music critic, Blaze de Bury (Henri Blaze), could “play on [it]” by writing of Félicien David’s *Le Désert* as “melodious tourism.” Hagan’s more detailed thoughts on the exoticism problem are strewn throughout her (posthumously published) *Félicien David, 1810–1876: A Composer and a Cause* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984).

me, [when traveling,] what is [truly] curious is what happens in the street and does *not* seem curious to an inhabitant of that country.”¹⁴

To be sure, Stendhal’s sentence does not use the words “exotic” or “exoticism.” Nonetheless, deconstructing it and locating its unspoken premises can reveal a lot about what exoticism is and is not, and what it was understood to be in Stendhal’s day and in the several decades that followed.

Stendhal, though best known to posterity for his novels, was also at various times a busy essayist on a number of topics, including music and foreign travel. For example, his *Vie de Rossini* remains a vital source of observations on the operatic life of his day. And his astuteness about matters of music and culture, generally—leavened by a tone that shifts between man-about-town casual and cultivated peevish—continue to fascinate scholars today.¹⁵

The quotation comes from a small volume that Stendhal wrote quickly to earn some extra money: *Mémoires d’un touriste* (1837). The immediate context of the sentence is one of Stendhal’s many small tirades, and the topic is “what fools call ‘curiosities.’” One might phrase Stendhal’s concern here in the form of a question: When one is touring in the provinces or a foreign country, what kinds of things are worth going out of one’s way to see?

The standard answer, as one could read in guide books, was simple: architectural monuments (including churches and tombs) and the art and artifacts in museums.¹⁶ Stendhal tries this on for size as he travels through Western Europe, only to find that such official sites and consecrated objects inevitably “look more or less like what one can see anywhere.” A day spent in this way “can bore you to death and teach you nothing.” Admittedly, Stendhal is speaking of London, Switzerland, Provence, and the villages of Italy and Spain (surely he would not have spoken thus of the Egyptian pyramids or the Great Wall of China).¹⁷ Instead, he advises the traveler to spend the same amount of time in a workaday district of that same foreign city or town (such as the financial district or the open-air market). There you will notice “a thousand curious details” about the

¹⁴Stendhal [Henri Beyle], *Mémoires d’un touriste*, 2 vols. (Paris: M. Lévy, 1854), vol. 2, 293 (thoughts noted in Marseilles, 1837): “Ce qui est curieux pour moi c’est ce qui se passe dans la rue et qui ne semble curieux à aucun habitant du pays.”

¹⁵See, e.g., Stephen Downes, “Musical Pleasures and Amorous Passions: Stendhal, the Crystallization Process, and Listening to Rossini and Beethoven,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 26 (2002–2003), 235–57; incorporated into his *The Muse as Eros: Music, Erotic Fantasy and the Male Creativity in the Romantic and Modern Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 34–60.

¹⁶Natural wonders too were considered worth seeing, of course. But they are not primarily what Stendhal means by *curieux*.

¹⁷To be accurate, Stendhal did not visit every specific location described in his *Mémoires*. As letters and biographies attest, he had at least one friend provide him with travel accounts that he then rewrote in the first person.

social habits of that people—details that would “*not* seem remarkable to anyone who lives in the region.”¹⁸

Stendhal’s remark cuts two ways. Its more obvious implication is that the most interesting features of a place are overly familiar to the native, who thus cannot notice how rich they are in cultural significance and how poetically they can speak to a sensitive observer. But, on second glance, one can just as well read Stendhal’s words as suggesting the opposite: that these features are thin in significance—more prosaic than poetic. They merely strike the ignorant observer as noteworthy or astonishing because he (or she) cannot make deeper, intimate contact with life in the region. Travelers from the big cities, Stendhal is saying—even supposedly unconventional or unusually alert travelers, such as he clearly thought himself to be—tend to fetishize everyday, banal aspects of life elsewhere and turn them into objects of fascination, desire, and sometimes dread.¹⁹

This secondary reading—one that treats the passage as skeptical of the whole touristic project—is not, as some might allege, a distortion imposed by some kind of cynical or postmodern attitude on my part. Rather, it is supported by certain explicit remarks scattered throughout the *Mémoires d’un touriste*. Only a few pages after the sentence that we have been examining, Stendhal admits that the curiosities about which he writes so entrancingly are at times a projection of his own moods and needs. Here he is, traveling through rural Spain:

The houses in all the villages [that we pass] have just been whitewashed, which gives them a clean and cheerful look that is absolutely extraordinary—which is to say, a look that is quite the opposite of what they are. But no matter: the sight of those rows of white houses, in the midst of big mountains covered with cork-tree forests, is charming.²⁰

In other words, foreign reality *is* for the most part “the opposite of extraordinary”: that is, utterly ordinary. The tourist, the observer who passes by the sites of daily life without entering them, is himself the agent

¹⁸Stendhal, *Mémoires d’un touriste*, vol. 2, 293 (my emphasis). I intentionally vary the translation of this sentence—and stress different words—each time I refer to it in order to catch different nuances. *Pays*, e.g., is not quite “country,” “land,” “homeland,” nor “region.”

¹⁹For a more straightforward instance of a tone of cultural superiority in travel writing, see an otherwise very similar passage from Flaubert’s Egyptian travel diaries (1849): Whereas he writes, “the [ancient] Egyptian temples bore me profoundly,” he admitted to being fascinated to see *inside* a café, “a donkey shitting and a gentleman pissing in the corner. No one finds such things odd; no one says anything.”—Quoted in the chapter “On the Exotic,” in Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 85, 94.

²⁰Stendhal, *Mémoires d’un touriste* vol. 2, 354.

that, through some mixture of ignorance and imagination, turns the mundane into the picturesque and noteworthy.

Still, explicit moments of self-awareness such as this one—moments that anticipate the insights into intercultural understanding (and self-understanding) of a late twentieth-century cultural critic such as Tzvetan Todorov—are exceptional in *Mémoires d'un touriste*.²¹ Even the congenitally ironic Stendhal was much of the time trapped in the attitudes and unspoken presuppositions of his era, and in certain behavioral manifestations of those attitudes. Take the use of seemingly innocuous language as seen in the word *curieux* in our first quotation (not to speak of, in the passage just cited, the possibly dismissive tag *charmant*). Curiosity is almost by definition a relatively unobjectionable and even praiseworthy trait (unless carried to excess, as by Pandora). The phrase “this child has no curiosity” would have been as reproachful in 1837 as it is today.

Stendhal the tourist treats a foreigner or foreign custom as an object of curiosity. Or, as he would have said, as *une curiosité*: The noun at that time could stand for the observer's readiness to be attracted (as “curiosity” still does today), but also for any phenomenon that did the attracting. Closely allied to such terms at the time was the phrase “curiosity cabinet.” Antecedent of our modern-day museum, the curiosity cabinet served as a repository of various “wonders.”²² Some of these items—especially certain objects from the natural world—were inherently and objectively rare, freakish, and (to use Stendhal's term) *extraordinaire*: meteorites or albino animals. But others would have been regarded at their distant place of origin as utterly *ordinaire*, undistinctive: colored stones, flora and fauna typical of the southern hemisphere, foreign costumes, implements of tribal ritual. When distant peoples and their behaviors become similarly “curious,” they lose their status as subjects. They devolve into objects of the evaluating and categorizing gaze of the one and sovereign subject, the visitor from the great metropolis.

The inherently visual metaphor of the “gaze,” central to much work in critical theory (for example, in studies of photography and film), is crucial

²¹Tzvetan Todorov, *The Morals of History*, trans. Alyson Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 3–12 (in which Todorov—a Bulgarian in France—ends up proposing that the highly value-laden but abysmally ignorant—“zero”-level—comments by French people about Bulgarians may potentially serve as a correcting balance for the “infinite” but uncritical knowledge by Bulgarians of their own culture and traits).

²²For an appreciative reminder of the value of scientific curiosity in travel, especially the almost superhuman achievements of Alexander von Humboldt, see Botton, *Art of Travel*, 99–123. Gustave Choquet organized the musical-instrument museum of the Paris Conservatoire into four divisions: strings, winds, percussion, and *curiosités*—Gustave Choquet, “Le Musée de notre Conservatoire de Musique,” *Le ménestrel*, 23 May 1875, 197–98; quoted in Jann Pasler, “The Utility of Musical Instruments in the Racial and Colonial Agendas of Late Nineteenth-Century France,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129 (2004), 32, n. 23.

here—and, as we shall see, problematic when we seek to apply it to music.²³ The items that obsess Stendhal as he travels around, that strike him as “curious . . . on the street,” are in most cases features observable *to the eye*, such as the distinctive physical features and expressive attitudes of the different populations: the strong Swiss chins and unsmiling mouths, the native cheerfulness (and stupidity) of the Provençal, the independence and exaggerated (yet somehow admirable) self-esteem of the Spaniard. All of these are arranged and labeled in a quasi-scientific manner, analogous to that used by other observers at the time to record—to “fix” for further study and comparison—such phenomena as the crystalline structure of feldspar, the wing shape and plumage of the peregrine falcon, or the African lion’s habit of sleeping in trees.²⁴

In short, Stendhal’s wording in that opening quotation is less innocent than first appears. During Stendhal’s very era—the late eighteenth and the early to mid nineteenth century—certain European powers were acquiring a number of major territories within and outside of Europe or (if they had already acquired them) organizing themselves to exploit those territories more fully and securely. Some ventures were short-lived, such as the incursions of Napoleonic France into Spain, Italy, Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Palestine. Others were longer-lasting: the British, French (beginning in 1830), Dutch, and Belgian colonization of much of South Asia (e.g., India), North Africa (e.g., Algeria), sub-Saharan Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and (later in the century) Indochina and Malaysia. Stendhal’s definition of the tourist’s attitude—his invoking of an almost childlike “curiosity” as its chief mark—is polemical, however consciously or unconsciously on his part.²⁵ It deflects or denies the very intensity of the attraction and repulsion that at the time formed central and complementary factors in travel to other regions. Indeed, that very combination of attraction and repulsion surely made

²³On the concept of the “gaze” in, e.g., film criticism (especially male vs. female ways of looking), see the wide range of views sketched out in Barbara Klinger, “In Retrospect: Film Studies Today,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2 (1988), 131–36; or see *Camera obscura* 20–21 (May–September 1989), a special issue on “The Spectatrix,” ed. Janet Bergstrom and Mary Anne Doane.

²⁴Stendhal, *Mémoires*, vol. 2, 224 (Geneva), 364 (“le brio naturel” of the southern Frenchman), 353 (ignorant iron traders in Perpignan), 358 (Spaniards are not impressed by, and are at most *curieux* about—tables are turned here!—the pretentious behavior of Parisians . . . and of Europeans who ape Parisians).

²⁵That is, readers will differ about the extent to which the remark entails a certain degree of skeptical self-deprecation regarding the position/authority of the tourist-observer. Polemic can be unconscious, after all: Many of us engage in polemic without realizing it, often thinking that we are stating the simple truth and not noticing how much we are in our statements eliding, selecting, and slanting to present a coherent or persuasive viewpoint.

Stendhal feel that the phenomena in question would be of interest to bookshop customers in France and elsewhere.²⁶

Stendhal's definition of *le curieux* can get us started on a working definition of exoticism in the arts.²⁷ But it is not one as it stands. It is premised after all upon the relationship between the tourist—observer—the cultured Frenchman or Frenchwoman—and real life elsewhere, however fraught or “constructed” we now realize that that relationship can or must be. At stake, that is, is the observer's relationship to what a century and a half later Edward Said would call the “brute reality” of the “lives, histories, and customs” of the region or country being visited or described, usually a poorer and less technologically developed one.²⁸ By contrast, exoticism in the arts does not consist of an observer's—reader's, audience member's—establishing a relationship with real life elsewhere. Rather, the observer confronts and interacts with an image of that Elsewhere that has been plainly constructed for his or her delectation by a person similar in background to the observer. Furthermore, all concerned—observer/recipient and author/artist—understand that the proffered image is primarily fictive, if based on at least some data or observations (received at second or third hand) about the Elsewhere in question.

I might here digress for a moment to expand on my brief phrase in the previous paragraph about how fraught and constructed the images often were. I take it as a given that all involved in creating, disseminating, and receiving (purchasing, enjoying, debating) these images were in their

²⁶Stendhal's brief comment on Algeria is worth noting. In Marseilles, he found everyone still speaking of the bold Algerian leader Abd-el-Kader, defeated by the French seven years earlier. He offers sardonic comment on the “courage,” “follies,” and “childish behavior” that, in his opinion, the French, too full of self-importance to stay a consistent course, showed in their first years of colonizing that country—*Mémoires* vol. 2, 326–27. Historians have recently made clear that support of this sort for an active imperializing stance (after having been bitterly and sometimes moralistically repudiated by prominent eighteenth-century writers as diverse as Diderot, Kant, Burke, and Adam Smith) became by the 1830s–40s the accepted position throughout all political and intellectual circles, and most notably liberal ones: e.g., in the writings of Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Hegel, and, to a degree, Marx. See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁷I offer my own definition in the Afterword. I first presented and discussed it (or rather an early version of it) in my “Exoticism and Orientalism in Music,” 266–71.

²⁸Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5. In that passage, Said is specifically referring to “cultures and nations whose location is in the East.” But the point is surely applicable to other cultures and locations and more generally to subordinate regions, such as rural ones within the home country. See Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), with its sections on Ireland under English control (and the poetry of Yeats) and on the Caribbean trade (as reflected in novels of Jane Austen).

preconceptions and preferences motivated and constrained *to varying extents* by the available “economies of desire” (as current cultural theory puts it): for example, patterns of stimulated yearning, and behaviors and cultural products for satisfying that yearning.²⁹ I also take it as a given that these agreed-upon and sometimes disputed cultural patterns and products, in turn, reflected (or commented on, or perhaps even influenced)—again, to various degrees—the relations of power at the time between the metropolis and the countryside and between richer, powerful nations and less powerful ones often rich in natural resources and human labor. We will encounter a number of specific cases of this further below. But back to my current point about the fictiveness implied in Stendhal’s quotation. . . .

“Wait a minute!” some might object: “Surely it is the artist (author, etc.) that is equivalent to Stendhal’s tourist. Especially if the artist actually visited the country and encountered the specific scene that is depicted or heard the kind of music that is being freely imitated.” This frequently heard objection generally assumes that imitating the local music is central to exotic composing, but it need not be, as scholars who emphasize “the-exotic-as-convention”—I mentioned Bellman, Head, and Bartoli earlier—have helped us realize. Even if, for argument’s sake, we accept this equivalence of the artist with Stendhal’s tourist, depiction is still not as transparent a process as has just been suggested. Generalization and idealization had been a central principle of the aesthetics of representational art ever since the Greeks, a process that involved filtering out a variety of incidental details in order to focus on the central features that conveyed the essence—and spiritual message—of the object or person being depicted. The novelist Marie d’Agoult put this traditional view memorably in an article on a portrait by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres of the aged composer Luigi Cherubini. Ingres’s painting, d’Agoult points out, has stressed the dignity in Cherubini’s lined face and given an “almost Roman fullness” to the folds in his overcoat. D’Agoult concludes: “[Ingres here] has resolved one of the greatest problems facing art: how to ennoble the commonplace while reproducing it exactly.”³⁰

But conscious—principled and moralistically rooted—editing of the truth is not the whole story. As scholars and critics have recently become more willing to recognize and discuss, the artist (painter, writer, musician) observes what he or she depicts through a scrim of ideological

²⁹See, e.g., James Williams, *Lyotard and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), 66–71 (on the release of libidinal energy in the creation and reception of visual images that depart in some way from, and thereby alter or challenge, everyday consensual perceptions of reality).

³⁰Article by the Comtesse Marie d’Agoult (under the pseudonym Daniel Stern), 7 January 1842, quoted in *Portraits by Ingres: Images of an Epoch*, ed. Gary Tinterow and Philip Conisbee (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 322, 355, 378–85 (here 384, n24: “ennobler la vulgarité en la reproduisant avec exactitude”).

givens and cultural interests, of which the artist and the reader/viewer/listener may not always be fully aware. Many a nineteenth-century traveler to the “Holy Land,” for example, was driven by a felt need to find confirmation or echoes of biblical accounts in what he or she saw there. This desire could arise from deep, quasi-fundamentalist religious conviction, but equally (even in a religious agnostic) from the basic yearning that one has for a familiar point of reference when one finds oneself in a disquieting new situation. Stendhal in Spain knew better, yet still could not prevent himself from describing a bunch of men whom he met at an inn—perhaps he felt that the journalistic style required it—as “resembling Don Quixote perfectly” in their stubborn insistence on certain archaic attitudes and prejudices.³¹ Thus does a frozen stereotype drawn from a written text—in this case, from Cervantes’s novel—displace complex, lived reality.³²

Besides, many painters, writers, and musicians never did visit the country or specific scene that they depicted. The numerous nineteenth- and early twentieth-century paintings of harem women, for instance, were, for the most part, created out of fantasy—necessarily so, given that outsiders (especially male) were not permitted to enter the harem, much less make images on paper or canvas of the women within.³³

³¹Stendhal found in these men “the same loyalty [that Don Quixote had], the same lack of reasonableness when certain subjects are broached.” The subjects on which they were unreasonable included “religion and the privileges of the nobility. These gentlemen are always proving to me, with much wit and charming liveliness, that the privileges of the nobles are useful to the [common] people. What I love about them is that they believe it.” Stendhal, *Mémoires*, vol. 2, 361.

³²See Said on the “textual attitude,” which accepts the “expertise . . . [broadly] attributed to” a written or published account (even a fictionalized one)—*Orientalism*, 92, 94. The textual attitude leads Stendhal to use Cervantes in order to confirm present reality. In contrast, one of the distinctive features of the exotic Middle East is that the process works more in the opposite direction: present reality confirms the Bible. See the following discussions of paintings, etchings (e.g., by David Roberts), and, increasingly, photographs (often staged): Malcolm Warner, “The Question of Faith: Orientalism, Christianity and Islam,” in *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse, The Allure of North Africa and the Near East*, ed. MaryAnne Stevens (Washington, D.C.: Royal Academy of Arts, in association with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 32–39; Philippe Jullian, *The Orientalists: European Painters of Eastern Scenes*, trans. Helga and Dinah Harrison (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), 108–11; Kathleen Stewart Howe, *Revealing the Holy Land: The Photographic Exploration of Palestine* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1997).

³³Islamic tradition tended to forbid physical images of the human form, though there had been notable exceptions through the centuries, such as the exquisite miniatures of sixteenth-century Persia and India under Mughal rule. Further on the harem and odalisque as imagined in nineteenth-century European art, see Frederick N. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–17.



Figure 1. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Le bain turc* (1863). Used by permission of La Réunion des Musées Nationaux and Art Resources of New York.

Ingres's famous painting *Le bain turc* (*The Turkish Bath*, completed 1863 and circular in shape, shown in Figure 1) is filled with deeply contented-looking naked women. Perhaps the women are supposed to be feeling hazy from hashish.³⁴ In any case, the painting has no doubt only the most oblique relationship to life in the Turkey of Ingres's era. Even when real Turkish women sat in their tiled bath houses (*hamams*), they

³⁴The painting, now at the Louvre, was originally nearly a square when "first finished" in 1859 and acquired by Prince Napoléon and Princess Clotilde; it was returned to Ingres as "unsuitable for a family residence," whereupon Ingres reworked it heavily. Patricia Condon, et al., *In Pursuit of Perfection: The Art of J.-A.-D. Ingres* (Louisville, Ky.: J. B. Speed Art Museum in association with Indiana University Press, 1983), 124–25.

probably did not remotely resemble the rather astonishing conglomeration of nearly identical, visually overlapping fleshy white bodies that Ingres, late in his long career, concocted as his culminating vision of Middle Eastern womanhood. To be sure, he did his best to make sure that the head wrappings and enameled wall tiles matched various more or less authentic examples to which he had direct or indirect access (examples that he could physically examine himself, perhaps in his own or some other Parisian collection—or else representations of such objects in other Westerners' drawings and paintings of Middle Eastern scenes). But the larger point is a blatant lie, made believable (if at all) by the truish tiles and towels. At best, we may today consider Ingres's canvas a fetching or insulting, but in any case primarily dreamlike, vision. At the same time, we may justifiably wonder whether all those who may have seen it—or a reproduction of it—in its own day or in the several generations thereafter were sophisticated enough not to take it as a quasi-objective (factual) snapshot, a “window” thrown open onto a real, existing world.

MUSIC AND REPRESENTATION

In short, exoticism in Ingres's *Turkish Bath* and many similar works, including musical ones, often consists not so much of that which is found in an unfamiliar locale and is thought unremarkable there (to paraphrase Stendhal again), but rather the opposite: That which is mostly *not* found in that country but which people here at home seriously believe—or piously hope, playfully imagine, anxiously fear—must or might be found there. Art historian Frederick N. Bohrer captures well this interaction of the exotic art work with preconceptions held by the intended audience (and perhaps by the artist himself or herself): “I approach exoticism as a Western attempt to flirt with Western expectations.”³⁵

As we have seen, Stendhal's definition of the tourist mind, once one has extended it to apply to *images* of foreign spots, could remain serviceable as a preliminary basis for discussing Ingres's *Turkish Bath* or, say, literary works about Native Americans or Japanese people, such as Longfellow's epic poem *Hiawatha* or David Belasco's play *Madame Butterfly* (the source of the Puccini opera). Most paintings, poems, and plays are frankly mimetic (representational). That is, one can actually point out specific items in such works (facial physiognomies, hair styles, clothing, bodily gestures, household objects, landscapes, and—in poems and plays—words and phrases) that carry a clear resemblance or even approximate equivalence to real phenomena (behaviors, speech patterns, etc.) that occur in a region. Of course, one can then discuss and debate the

³⁵Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 11.

degree and kind of resemblance and difference. But nobody would doubt the basic validity of undertaking such a “compare and contrast.”

Music is a much less overtly representational art—or some would claim, not representational at all. The one obvious method available to artistic or literary products for evoking a distant place—reproducing certain of its surface features understood to comprise, or at least to plainly allude to, more or less empirical data apparent to any observer—is in music largely unavailable. How can music, without verbal or visual aid, even *indicate* to a listener, much less *represent* in any significant degree, the following primarily visual scenes, each of which has a substantial pedigree within the West as an exotic icon?

- a Japanese tea ceremony;
- the tangled vines of the Amazonian rain forest;
- a sad-eyed young Native American woman with papoose or the Old Testament’s Rebecca at the well;
- the gently flapping crossed sails of a shallow-bottomed boat (*dahabiyeh*) drifting down the Nile.

Impossible. Music is inherently incapable of directing one’s gaze or attention to visual phenomena of such specificity, and even less to olfactory or tactile phenomena.

This is a point that often needs to be made more generally, even to sophisticated musicians, listeners, and critics. We may think we are hearing “flowing water” in the piano accompaniments to some Schubert songs, but, in most cases, the words have prepared us to do so. The “flowing” figurations by themselves could as easily refer to gentle, caressing breezes, or to nothing more concrete than the feeling of life progressing harmoniously. Similarly, innocent listeners hearing Musorgsky’s “Bydlo” (“The Ox-Cart,” in *Pictures at an Exhibition*) will mostly not think of an ox-cart. But, once they have been told the movement’s title, they will “hear” the cart and may imagine in some detail its lumbering progress.

Stravinsky and others are thus largely right when they note that music cannot without external help unambiguously represent (reflect, evoke, refer to) the physical world and human society—whether the phenomena in question are exotic or not. But this rule has two exceptions that make all the difference—indeed, they can undercut substantially the radical autonomist claims of Stravinsky and others.

The first and more obvious exception is, as philosophically inclined musicians and musically sensitive philosophers have long recognized, when a composer lets a given passage focus on musical or other auditory aspects of reality. The sounds of nature—bird song, storm winds, cries of dogs, horses, or, indeed, humans—lend themselves particularly well to

direct imitation, as do the sounds of industrial technology: the tick of a clock or the rhythmic chug of a train's engine and the accelerating slap of its wheels. Even so, certain of these sounds become standardized, encoded enough to be identifiable by listeners, whereas others do not. In a recent piece for string trio that describes a young woman from Appalachia leaving home and boyfriend for Vail, Colorado, composer John Mackey resorted to conventional train sounds: "I realize that there is no train service between Appalachia and Vail, but it's a lot easier to write music that sounds like a train than music that sounds like a Greyhound Bus."³⁶

Similarly, other situations can be evoked by referring to specific musical pieces and styles that listeners have been trained to associate with them, though these associations may vary with the individual. Bugle fanfares may evoke, for a given listener, life on an army base, battle scenes of long ago, fox hunting, or harness racing ("And they're off!"). The American bugle call known as "Taps" is associated with nighttime ("lights out") and also with military funerals. It was inserted by Hindemith into his *When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd: Requiem for Those We Love* (1946) as a symbol of mourning for two national leaders: Abraham Lincoln (the subject of the Walt Whitman text that Hindemith used) and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Similarly, a minuet movement in a symphony can call up associations or memories of people dancing, but individuals will differ about whether what they are "hearing" is courtiers in a palace, or common folk in a cross-timbered inn or on the village green.³⁷

Associations such as these may derive from direct life experiences. Some of us do not merely associate bugle calls with the idea/image of army or summer camp but remember living in a barracks or bunk and having heard those calls on a regular basis. As for the types of dances that are echoed in Baroque suites, Classic-era symphonies, and such, certain people today are familiar with them (in some version) from participating in amateur folk-dance gatherings. Many eighteenth-century concertgoers and professional musicians must have seen actual peasants dancing; one suspects that Haydn saw peasants dancing when a group of them showed up at Eszterháza ("dressed in their national costumes") to hail the prince.³⁸

³⁶John Mackey, notes to his *Wrong-Mountain Stomp*, accessed (along with a recording and score) at www.ostimusic.com (12 August 2006).

³⁷Arguments have been made for hearing peasants in the earthier and more heavy-footed of Haydn's minuets. This is, though, largely surmise.

³⁸H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, 5 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976–80), vol. 2, 99–100 (quotation); see also 684: Haydn used Roma ("Gypsies") as supernumeraries in one of the operas that he put on at the castle.

More often, especially in more recent times, such associations come mediated by representations in literature, the press, commercial entertainment, and the arts. We know what particular combinations of musical sounds mean “battle” because we have heard Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* or have kept our ears open while watching Ken Burns’s TV series *The Civil War* or (fictional) feature films set during World War II.

The second, less obvious way that music can represent anything beyond itself is by doing such things as recreating or shadowing the thought and feeling processes of the human mind. This is after all something that music, by common consent, is well equipped to do: a point that in recent years has been richly elaborated by scholars and critics.³⁹ Even in common language, musicians and music lovers speak with some confidence of music’s ability to create mood, to set forth a musical argument, to make gestures, to engage in rhetoric, to trace—like many a drama—an arc of exposition, struggle, and resolution.

Let me isolate “mood” for a moment. Music’s ways of evoking “states of soul” (as the Romantics sometimes called them: *Seelenzustände*, *états d’âme*) can be more precise than its attempts to mimic the five bodily senses. Still, it is not obvious whether a musical analogy to a given feeling, sentiment, or thought process comprises a form of representation in the way that we have been discussing.⁴⁰ We shall return to this complication a bit later.⁴¹

The various difficulties noted in the past few paragraphs throw us back to the first of the two processes that I mentioned as being available for musical representation: reproducing or alluding to real-world sounds and to musical events and styles. It is available but hardly reliable: Even such simple and familiar musical devices as bugle calls (as noted above) do not “signify” unambiguously. And the process turns immensely more problematic when applied to an unfamiliar and exotic geocultural region. The reasons for this are quite disparate in nature, depending on whether one is speaking of non-musical sounds or musical ones.

Foreign sounds that are not in themselves musical are rarely so distinctive that they can predictably convey an exotic charge. Bird calls of distant lands quickly blur with memories of familiar ones. Foreign waterfalls, the creak of foreign ox-carts, the groan of foreign longshore-

³⁹See with regard to the instrumental works of Haydn, for example, Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn’s “Ingenious Jesting with Art”: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992).

⁴⁰And it is much less obvious whether music can narrate and whether it has a “past tense”—a condition usually considered crucial for distinguishing between the narrating voice and the narrated events. See Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 32, 52–56, 169–70.

⁴¹See the section in the present article entitled “Evocation *per musica*.”

men lifting heavy loads onto or off of cargo vessels—none of these sounds conveys much special character by itself (that is, without some verbal or visual clue that specifies what one is hearing).

With certain foreign musical languages/styles/gestures, the problem is quite the reverse: They are so distinctive, so unlike those to which the listener is accustomed, that the listener can barely find his bearings.⁴² Systems of musical communication and practice often differ irreconcilably from one country or group to another and carry quite different associations for people who grew up within them than those (if any) held by outsiders. For example, Indian *rāga* and Mozart sonatas employ quite different scales and other basic building blocks, and have developed over time their own distinctive, even idiosyncratic performance styles. The Western composer who composes exotic music must still write what will be recognized by the listener as “music.” The composer must often therefore exclude the very stylistic and formal features that make the musical traditions of that other region distinctive from those of the West.⁴³

IF MOZART HAD COMPOSED RĀGAS

Had Mozart heard a Hindustani or Karnatak *rāga* and tried to mimic it in a keyboard sonata (or even merely allude to it), he most likely would have eliminated most or all of the very style factors that made that *rāga* characteristic of its own local traditions. And not primarily because he was (if he was, which we do not know) mean-spirited toward or fearful of non-Westerners and their cultural expressions, but because of a combination of more systemic, less personal factors:⁴⁴

⁴²Or in some ways the problem *is* the same: In Carl Orff’s opera *Prometheus* (1968), “the numerous [Japanese and Balinese] drum [and other percussion] instruments do not present enough differences in timbre to be separated by the listener’s ear.” Jürgen Maehder, “Non-Western Instruments in Western Twentieth-Century Music: Musical Exoticism or Globalization of Timbres?” in *L’Oriente: Storia di una figura nelle arti occidentali (1700–2000)*, 2 vols, ed. Paolo Amalfitano and Loretta Innocenti (Rome: Bulzoni, 2007) vol. 2, 459.

⁴³For an illuminating side-by-side layout of some of the underlying principles of Western and Indian “classical” music (including scales and principles of notation), see Bonnie C. Wade, *Music in India: The Classical Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 24–31. Imaginative comparisons between Western opera and Balinese ritual, and between concert life in the West and in Japanese *shamisen* performances are offered in, respectively, James A. Boon, “‘Extravagant Art’ and Balinese Ritual,” and William P. Malm, “The Rise of Concert Shamisen Music in Nineteenth Century Japan,” in *Recovering the Orient: Artists, Scholars, Appropriations*, ed. Andrew Gerstle and Anthony Milner (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 339–56, 293–315.

⁴⁴Mozart’s attitudes toward Eastern Europe are fascinatingly explored in Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 106–15. Wolff stops short of considering the possible implications of his study for Mozart’s *music* and that of other eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century composers, such as the Polish-style sonatas of Telemann or the various Hungarian-style passages in Beethoven.

- Mozart's imagination was shaped by Western notational conventions and the limitations of Western instruments—most notably keyboard instruments, with their relatively fixed tuning.⁴⁵
- He was inevitably ignorant of the ways that coherence and significance are produced in the various types of Indian classical (or art) music.
- He would have had to tailor the artistic product to match the expectations and the aesthetic/stylistic preconceptions and values that he knew that his audience (and his intended performers) would bring to the piece.

Thus, a *rāga* for piano by Mozart or one of his contemporaries could only have arisen as a kind of hothouse experiment, written for his own personal curiosity and that of a few specialists.

Of course, Mozart did not compose a *rāga* sonata, even though he must have known about the British colonization of India and may conceivably have run across some magazine articles or book chapters about Indian music, perhaps even one that was accompanied by some transcribed snatches.⁴⁶ Other composers, though, have tried over the years to do “cross-cultural” composing of the sort just described. In 1828, Giuseppe Donizetti (brother of the opera composer Gaetano) was hired to establish European-style bands for the Ottoman Empire. (The Sultan had recently eliminated the Janissary corps and its *zurna*-and-percussion bands that had so impressed and terrified Europeans during the Siege of Vienna in 1683.) Sometime during his twenty-seven years in Turkey, Giuseppe composed a *peşrev*, in which he explored certain traditional practices (including microtonal inflections) that in his daily work in Constantinople he helped to replace and render obsolete. Not surprisingly, this one Turkish-style piece by Giuseppe seems to have had no real public life until unearthed in the twentieth century and published in a Turkish music periodical.⁴⁷ It turns out to be the truest kind of *curiosité*: something that exists on no known street in any country and seems remarkable to a few scholars (Turkish and Western alike) but pointless to the rest of music-loving humanity.

⁴⁵Yes, even Mozart's remarkably fecund and diverse imagination was shaped and constrained by certain stylistic norms of his day.

⁴⁶Or one of the numerous “Hindoo airs” that were published with piano accompaniment around that time. See Ian Woodfield, “The ‘Hindostannic Air’: English Attempts to Understand Indian Music in the Late Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119 (1994), 189–211.

⁴⁷Lâika Karabey, “Donizetti ve Türk Musikisi,” *Musiki Mecmuası* 70 (1 Aralık 1953), 288–89 and 297–98.

EVOCATION PER MUSICA

Thus, writing instrumental music that sounds recognizably foreign, yet is comprehensible to a Western listener, puts the composer in quite a predicament. The predicament can be seen as a special case of the great “problem of art” mentioned earlier in the quotation from Marie d’Agoult: how to render a portrayal at once faithful and pleasurable. But it is more intense than most such predicaments in the arts because of the very two music-specific factors that we have been exploring: the limited representational power of music and the limited comprehensibility of many non-Western musical systems and materials to most Western listeners.⁴⁸

The standard way out of this predicament has been to enlist precisely those elements that I have been pointedly excluding during the past few pages: visual aids, such as costumes and staging; and verbal ones, such as sung text or, in instrumental works, descriptive titles. Odd and counterintuitive though outsiders may find it, music critics and scholars—and practicing musicians—have often given short shrift to these contextualizing, non-musical elements. Instead, they have preferred to judge the degree and kind of exoticness in a work mainly or entirely by the pitches, rhythms, and instrumental timbres indicated in the score.⁴⁹

True, verbal and visual elements can provide a concrete correlative for the kinds of “free-floating” moods and emotions that, as we have noted, music can evoke, even on its own. But that solution cannot resolve the paradox. At most, it helps composers find their way around it. Worse, the verbal/visual solution often ends up being paradoxical as well, since the non-musical elements that are being enlisted to concretize the musical message are themselves often oversimplified, distorted, or, in many cases, entirely imaginary.

The resulting paradox (in regard to both musical and non-musical features) may be summarized as follows:

- On the one hand, musical exoticism is largely self-contained. That is to say, it is at least to some extent defined by means of musical and other features that are, in most respects, identifiably Western in origin or invention rather than by features that can be reliably linked in one-to-one correspondence to aspects of the locale and culture that is supposedly being depicted.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Or even the utter incompatibility of non-Western and Western musical principles.

⁴⁹See Locke, “Broader View,” 478–83, and, as examples, the works of Rice, Cooper, and Girardi mentioned at the opening of the present essay.

⁵⁰As noted earlier, many non-musical aspects of foreign cultures tend to be perceived by Westerners as either undistinctive—too much like Us—or nonsensical—too different from Us. Similarly, many foreign *musical* features are either found simple and unremarkable or, when extremely different from Western conventions, “non-musical.” This point has been made forcefully in Head, *Orientalism*.

- On the other hand, many of those musical and extra-musical materials were selected for use by the composer precisely because listeners *perceived* them as representing or relating to that other region or group, a region understood as being different from “one’s own.”

This paradox can be seen as constituting a logical impossibility. That is, there seems no way to imply or evoke another place, especially distant or different, since one cannot (or could not until very recently, with the broadening of style options in Western music) represent it as it really is without writing music that—as I proposed in regard to Mozart and the *rāga*—would be rejected as unlistenable by most performers and audiences, or even by the composer himself.

HOW MUSICAL EXOTICISM MOVES

“Eppur se muove!” With these words—“And, nonetheless, it *moves*!”—Galileo responded to the clerics who sought to prove that the Earth is fixed and that the heavenly bodies swirl around it. Musical exoticism is similar, in that it manages to exist, despite logical logjams. It (to reinterpret Galileo’s verb) “moves”: stays alive, keeps changing, will not stand still. Individual pieces fall out of the active repertoire of exotic works or get rediscovered and become important again to performers and listeners. And composers continue to create entirely new works in a spirit that one could fairly describe as, at least partly, exoticist. A repertoire that within the past decade or two has produced such highly wrought and deeply considered new shoots as Paul Simon’s *Graceland* album, Steve Reich’s *The Cave*, or Tan Dun’s *Symphony 1997* is a repertoire on the move.

Shifting the focus from composers to listeners and performers suggests another meaning for Galileo’s verb “move.”⁵¹ Over the past several centuries, musical exoticism—in some of its better instances, anyway—has moved listeners, has stirred them, been taken warmly to their hearts; and performers (who are, of course, listeners as well) have felt moved to master it and identify with it. In this sense, it has been one

⁵¹Music historians’ longstanding overemphasis on the composer’s viewpoint is challenged in Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 39–107; and Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr, “Introduction: Music Patronage (Activism) as ‘a Female-Centered Cultural Process,’” in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860*, ed. Locke and Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–23 (3). I explore other ingrained habits of music-history writing in Ralph P. Locke, “Music and/as Social Concern: Imagining the Relevant Musicologist,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 499–530 (esp. 510–24).

of the secondary but still important factors in the construction of modern concert life.⁵²

To be sure, there is a possibly negative side to this dynamic. Musical exoticism can be seen as a repertoire or process not only on the move but on the make.⁵³ Exotic procedures, being colorful and often instantly attention-getting or attractive, can become a cheap pleasure, habituating listeners to a certain kind of obviousness of effect. Furthermore, since the musically exotic is easy to write about and to encapsulate in a few words, it lends itself well to various manipulative and exploitive tactics. It has regularly served as a marketing tool for the promotion of musical events and careers. A Spanish pianist may be unable to get hired, especially outside of Spain, without playing lots of Albéniz or Granados—works that are exotic to listeners though presumably not to the performer. Similarly, Fazıl Say, a young Turkish pianist who has resided for some years in Berlin, chose or agreed to put onto his first commercial CD the “Turkish” sonata of Mozart, K331. Does Mozart’s *alla turca* music feel exotic to him? Does the music become more exotic for the European, American, or Japanese listener when it is played by a Turkish pianist? As it happens, Say plays the concluding “Rondo alla turca”—and everything else on the CD—pretty much the way other folks do, though with a bracing freedom of tempo and dynamics (and occasional melodic embellishments) that might, or might not, have something to do with his early exposure to a very different, more improvisatory musical tradition.⁵⁴

One should not single out Spaniards or Turks. Throughout the Western musical world, performers use music that is *not* related to their ethnic background to make their concerts attractive/distinctive. Many American orchestras stay alive partly by playing the exotic/national card over and over again. Their concerts are sometimes now announced by geographic or ethnic “titles” on billboards and in newspaper ads: Russian Jewels, Land of the Midnight Sun, Wonders of the East (which can mean anything from Rimsky-Korsakov’s tuneful *Sheherazade* to a rather

⁵²Primary factors have included the cult of technical proficiency—seen in virtuosic solo playing and also in the virtuosically synchronized large and varied ensemble—and a belief in the uplifting powers of art. Bruno Nettl notes three other factors: composed works, emphasis on innovation, and relative autonomy from other aspects of Western culture—*The Western Impact on World Music: Change, Adaptation, and Survival* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 5.

⁵³I borrow the phrase from Ellie Hisama’s pointed article about images of the non-Western in recent Western music: “Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn,” *Popular Music* 12/2 (May 1993), 91–104.

⁵⁴Mozart Sonatas K 330, 331, 332 and Variations K 265, recorded by pianist Fazıl Say—Atlantic CD 21970-2. The pianist has also composed “Turkish Dances” and “Variations on Mozart’s Rondo alla turca,” both for piano solo.

esoteric piece by Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu), Gypsy fiddling, and, of course, España! or Olé! (complete with emphatic punctuation).⁵⁵

The exotic has also played a complex role in the definition of the art of music itself. For example, Italian opera in eighteenth-century England was famously described by Samuel Johnson as “an exotic and irrational entertainment,” in large part because the language was foreign (Italian), but also because of certain off-putting stylistic features (such as the elaborately florid vocal parts) and the association of the genre with aristocratic privilege and various types of self-display (by both men and women) and sexual aberration (the *castrati* but also opera-loving dandies).⁵⁶ Inevitably, once opera became a mainstream high-art genre throughout the West, its experiments with the exotic helped it resist routinization. Opera maintained its powers of exquisite, or weird, fascination in part through ever-new infusions or inventions bearing the scent of the Other: Mozart’s bouncy peasants in several operas (and his exquisite fake-Spanish fandango in *Marriage of Figaro*, based on a movement from Gluck’s ballet *Don Juan*); Verdi’s life-loving or fate-obsessed Spanish gypsies (in *Il trovatore* and *La forza del destino*); Massenet’s placid, almost otherworldly ancient Christians in *Hérodiade* (far in spirit, one suspects, from many bustling, materialistic Parisian operagoers of his own day); the crudely selfish, even nasty Sicilians and Calabrians in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* (the title of the work, “Rustic Chivalry,” is at once sarcastic and condescending) and Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*; the ultra-gentle Japanese women in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (as seen in their “O Kami” chorus); the pseudo-American “shimmy” rhythm used heavily in Weill’s *Threepenny Opera*; and the gamelan-like sounds that lend a ritualistic, ominous glow to several Britten operas and to the opening of the musical show *Miss Saigon*.⁵⁷

These specific examples of musical exoticism are but a small sampling of a repertoire of important and influential and, let us not forget, greatly loved musical works. Many aspects of these works escape our standard analytical categories and methods, especially those that are colored by—or rich in—associations, implications, extra-musical meanings. This vast and varied body of works deserves to be studied from multiple points of

⁵⁵The CD entitled “Fiesta!” that *BBC Music Magazine* released with its February 2003 issue draws primarily on a Royal Albert Hall concert of September 2, 2002, conducted by Peruvian-born Miguel Harth-Bedoya, with music by Falla, Ginastera, Piazzolla, and others.

⁵⁶In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755. See Linda Austern, “‘Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises’: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine [in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Attitudes toward Music],” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 26–42, 313–17.

⁵⁷On the first of these instances, see Dorothea Link, “The Fandango Scene in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 133 (2008), 69–92.

view. Fortunately, such studies are becoming more frequent nowadays. But the quotation from Stendhal—and the limitations that we were able to reveal in it earlier in this article—should remind us that any study of musical exoticism will be doomed if it does not take into consideration the highly constructed and artificial nature of musical art. Musical exoticism is not, as one music critic of Stendhal's day put it, "melodious tourism," because it is not, for the most part, analogous to tourism at all: It is not responding to real experiences of a foreign place or group.⁵⁸ It is a dream nearly from beginning to end. And, like all dreams, it will be immensely meaningful, not as a commentary on the peoples and places that are being dreamt of, but as a window into the desires and anxieties of the dreamer. In the case of exotic musical works of the West (mainly Europe and North America), the dreamer is the composer and, in a larger sense, the whole musical community that supports him or her—the performers, critics, and audiences of the composer's day and, inevitably, of subsequent generations as well, up to and including ourselves.

Equally important, the attempt to portray exotic lands and peoples, and the openness to fresh influences and irritations from unfamiliar cultures (or one's mistaken impressions of them), reveals itself to be no "special case" or marginal phenomenon in Western art music but, rather, one its keystones. As such, it deserves to be explored and explained as closely as other phenomena that have long been more central in our textbooks and scholarly conferences, such as concerto-grosso form or late nineteenth-century harmonic techniques. If we manage to carry out these tasks with one tenth of Stendhal's alertness and wit (and with some of his occasional willingness to engage in self-criticism), we may consider ourselves lucky, indeed.

AFTERWORD: A DEFINITION

Having used Stendhal's definition of *le curieux* as a jumping-off point, I might end by offering my own current (and decidedly provisional) five-part attempt at a definition of musical exoticism:

- Musical exoticism is the process of evoking in or through music—whether that music is "exotic-sounding" or not—a place, people, or social milieu that is not entirely imaginary and that differs profoundly from the "home" country or culture in attitudes, customs, and morals. (The evocation may also involve a displacement to a much earlier time period, such as ancient Babylon.) More precisely, musical exoticism is the process of

⁵⁸See footnote 13.

evoking a place, people, social milieu that is *perceived* as different from home by the people who created the exoticist cultural product and by the people who receive it.

- Beneath the surface, the place, people, social milieu that is being evoked may be perceived as quite different from home but also as resembling home in certain ways.
- The differences and resemblances between Here and There may carry a variety of emotional charges: they may register as consoling, may trouble a listener's complacency, and so on.
- Whereas the differences between Here and There were generally conscious on the part of the creators of the exotic musical work and readily apparent to listeners of the day, the *resemblances* may have been relatively conscious *or quite unconscious* and readily apparent *or not readily apparent*. For example, they may not have been mentioned by critics at the time of the work's first appearance.
- In any case, if the work continues to be performed over many years, such broader cultural resonances—the perceived differences from *and* resemblances to the home culture—are likely to fade and be replaced by others, given that listeners may now be living in new and different cultural situations and may thus bring different values and expectations to the work.

This definition, multilimbed though it is, remains woefully incomplete. It does not resolve—or even raise—two crucial questions that were addressed here: How does music interact with non-musical elements in works that evoke the exotic? And how much must the resulting music itself indicate (in whatever manner, quasi-authentic or utterly conventionalized) the musical sounds of the culture in question?

Still, my definition does not exclude the use of such coded-as-exotic materials. Quite the contrary, it sets us on the path toward formulating a paradigm for musical exoticism that includes the stylistic aspects that have long been the primary focus of study, but also many other, more broadly cultural and interdisciplinary aspects as well. Understood in this fashion, musical exoticism is a perfect field upon which to exercise a wholistic musicology that blends close examination of the notes with a comprehensive presentation of the (sometimes stable, sometimes changing) contexts in which those notes were and are heard.