

Editorial Introduction

GEORGE E. LEWIS, in collaboration with JOY H. CALICO

This special issue on music, race, and ethnicity was conceived by musicologist Judy S. Tsou when we were cochairs of the AMS Committee on Race and Ethnicity, and then supported and developed by the *Journal's* editorial team and Editorial Board. It has been more than two years in the making. The issue aims to affirm the centrality to musicology of scholarly conversations about race and ethnicity, while also asserting a central role for musicology in exploring the crucial issues of our time—a vital concern for both younger and more established scholars working on these issues.

The articles presented here were subject to the *Journal's* regular peer review, editorial oversight, and procedural guidelines rather than a curatorial process. They offer both implicit and explicit critiques of musicology's engagement with discourses of race and ethnicity, while confronting the historiography of the European musical tradition, even hinting at a retroactive creolization of that tradition.¹ The articles turn largely on the reception of blackness in performance and composition over a period of almost eight centuries: the Afro-German trumpeters of early modern Europe, the development of US popular music in the nineteenth century, the black American lieder singers and opera composers of the 1920s, and the blackness-influenced Romani performers and composers of *jazz manouche*. Two of the articles express concern about the emergence of right-wing white nationalism in Europe and the United States today. In Germany now, as Arne Spohr notes, this includes an attempt to establish German identity as essentially “white.” To do so requires a form of prestidigitation by which the presence and contributions of African people in Europe since medieval times are made to simply disappear. In this issue, musicological scholarship asserts its place in countering this kind of erasure.

Blackness in these pages becomes part of the formation of both early modern Europe and modernism. While one might well flinch at the accounts of discrimination, exclusion, and subjugation that traverse the centuries, the encounter with blackness goes far beyond these dislocations. Blackness also

1. See George E. Lewis, “The Situation of a Creole,” in “Defining Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music,” forum convened and edited by David Clarke, *Twentieth-Century Music* 14, no. 3 (October 2017): 442–46.

becomes a nexus of dreams—of difference, of social change, of citizenship, of belonging—realized through music.

The Afro-German former slaves chronicled by Spohr deployed their trumpets to work toward full citizenship. Siv Lie tells us that the performers of *jazz manouche* used Bloomian misreadings of Romani history and African American history to create a genre where none had stood before. Matthew Morrison observes that “ethnic whites also felt free to perform the *limits* of self as citizen through blackface on and off the minstrel stage.”² And we hear from Kira Thurman about the struggles of the brilliant tenor Roland Hayes only a few decades later to affirm, through his performances of German lieder, that black liveness matters. David Gutkin chronicles how H. Lawrence Freeman’s dream of becoming “the colored Wagner” leads him toward a cosmopolitan understanding of modernism; like Julius Eastman’s strident invocation of scatological terms for gays and blacks in the titles of his pieces,³ Freeman places Afro-diasporic tropes and histories—sharecropping, slavery, and legends of Africa—at the center of classical music.

Meanwhile, “much to the astonishment of their audiences,” Thurman writes, “when black singers such as Marian Anderson, Aubrey Pankey, and Roland Hayes opened their mouths, they sounded like Germans. . . . [T]hey embodied the performative qualities of German national identity.”⁴ Why were these audiences shocked? Scarcely a century had passed since Ludwig van Beethoven, in a fit of pique, had removed the name of Afro-European violinist George Bridgetower from the dedication to the new sonata they had already premiered, substituting the name of Rudolph Kreutzer.⁵ The original whimsical dedication, “Sonata mulattica Composta per il Mulatto Brischdauer gran pazzo e compositore mulattico,” indicated that race posed no barrier to their musical communication. Yet as Thurman notes, by the time Hayes, Marian Anderson, and other African American singers began performing in Europe, “a preestablished iconography of African American popular entertainers . . . had been in circulation in Europe for at least five decades.”⁶ Morrison observes that this iconography was based on blackface

2. Matthew D. Morrison, “Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse,” this issue, 790.

3. See George E. Lewis, foreword to *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music*, ed. Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), vii–xix.

4. Kira Thurman, “Performing Lieder, Hearing Race: Debating Blackness, Whiteness, and German Identity in Interwar Central Europe,” this issue, 829.

5. See “Ludwig van Beethoven, Sonate für Klavier und Violine (A-Dur) op. 47, 1. Satz, Partitur, Autograph, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, NE 86,” Beethoven-Haus Bonn website, accessed August 3, 2019, https://da.beethoven.de/sixcms/detail.php?&template=dokseite_digitales_archiv_en&_dokid=ha:wm108&_seite=1-2. See also Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven*, translated by Henry Edward Krehbiel, revised and edited by Elliot Forbes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1:333.

6. Thurman, “Performing Lieder,” 827n3.

minstrelsy, “the first popular entertainment export from the United States to travel internationally, as troupes were touring in western Europe, Australia, and as far as Japan by the mid-nineteenth century.”⁷

Sharpening musicology’s engagement with race and ethnicity can also produce new understandings of the relations among formations of canon, race, and genre. All of these processes take place in dialogue with identity—or for some, identity politics. Despite the current fashion for deriding identity politics, the articles in this issue show us how far back we can locate that discussion, as well as the diversity of subject positions involved. The baleful binaries so often invoked in response to demands for greater and more diverse representation in scholarly discourses (quality or inclusion, scholarly value or identity politics) ignore the fact that identity has always been central to music: Wagner’s mythical Wälzung tribe, Schoenberg’s proclamation of a method that would assure the superiority of German music for the next hundred years, Julian Carrillo’s search for a microtonal thirteenth sound.

While genre markers are often framed by scholars as promoting community and intelligibility, one might ask a race-aware genre scholarship to confront the gatekeeping, border-policing, and kinship-enforcing functions of genre. As the articles presented here make clear, musical content is far from the only criterion by which listeners make judgments about genre. Race becomes part of the content being experienced. As Thurman finds, “race was the primary filter through which listeners interpreted black performances of the Austro-German musical canon. . . . [C]ritics determined whether a singer’s performance met the standards not only of Austro-German musical culture but also of cultural citizenship.”⁸ This special issue demonstrates how genre formation and racial formation mutually inform and co-constitute each other, as affirmed by David Brackett’s recursive notion that “genre is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results.”⁹

If the main aim of the spurious “identity or excellence” binary is to preempt non-majoritarian attempts to win space by portraying people of color as the only identity politicians around, philosopher Monique Roelofs counters with her understanding that identity politics has also been centrally associated with “certain kinds of white, masculinist, middle-class, European, heterosexual, and colonial perspectives.” Roelofs recognizes that both identity and the aesthetic can be double-edged swords. On the one hand, she notes that “constructions of identity in the arts pose the risk of aesthetic deficiency

7. Morrison, “Race, Blacksound,” 783. See also Mahan Esfahani, presenter, “The Dvořák Statement,” BBC Radio 3 website, July 31, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08qtdtx>.

8. Thurman, “Performing Lieder,” 834.

9. David Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 13.

or tedium.” On the other, she maintains that “artistic inquiries into identity and difference . . . can push the boundaries of experience, engender new formal vocabularies, and alter the forums that support public life.” Her conclusion is that “the question of identity, broadly conceived, reaches into the core of the notion of the aesthetic.”¹⁰

This is evident in the articles presented here. As Lie notes, “The coalescence of *jazz manouche* as a practice and as a genre label depended overwhelmingly on its associations—forged by music industry representatives, critics, historians, audiences, and musicians themselves—with Manouche ethnoraec.”¹¹ Morrison argues that “sonic and corporeal ideas of race were materially taken up into the body, commercially developed, and commodified, within a system that reinforced the development of whiteness itself as a form of property to which value (political, economic, and cultural) is assigned.”¹² He further avers that “Blacksound also accounts for the legacy of violence that is embedded in the commercialization of popular music out of blackface performance.”¹³

As Thurman writes, “Classical music was universal, many claimed, but as Hayes’s and Anderson’s stories tell us, audiences tacitly understood it to be a white medium.”¹⁴ Almost a century later, composer Johannes Kreidler exploited this ongoing consensus to great effect in his influential 2009 New Conceptualist chamber work *Fremdarbeit*. In his performed commentary on the work as “moderator,” Kreidler claimed to have “outsourced” crucial aspects of his work on the piece to two composers from Asia. As moderator, Kreidler highlights their “failure” to master the language of new music; audience members in the video documentary about the piece appear to agree.¹⁵ While Kreidler could simply have said that he had hired two German students, who may or may not have been masters of the new music language, that would not have invoked “das Fremde” via play with racialized imputations of kinship, membership, and insider-outsider discourse. Kreidler later admitted that he had not actually hired additional composers.¹⁶ The video documents an audience that is unable to conceive of ascribing kinship, membership, citizenship, and subjecthood to non-European composers. If Gayatri Spivak’s substitution of creolity for kinship discourse “is about the

10. Monique Roelofs, “Identity and Its Public Platforms: A String of Promises Entwined with Threats,” *Texte zur Kunst* 107 (September 2017): 68–84, here 70.

11. Siv B. Lie, “Genre, Ethnoracial Alterity, and the Genesis of *jazz manouche*,” this issue, 666.

12. Morrison, “Race, Blacksound,” 794.

13. *Ibid.*, 791.

14. Thurman, “Performing Lieder,” 851.

15. See Martin Iddon, “Outsourcing Progress: On Conceptual Music,” *Tempo* 70, no. 275 (January 2016): 36–49, here 43. See also Johannes Kreidler, *Fremdarbeit* (documentary), Mainz: Wergo / Deutscher Musikrat, 2015, DVD.

16. See Max Erwin, “Here Comes Newer Despair: An Aesthetic Primer for the New Conceptualism of Johannes Kreidler,” *Tempo* 70, no. 278 (October 2016): 5–15, here 11.

delexicalization of the foreign,”¹⁷ the audience’s acceptance of whiteness as a baseline appears via an inability to perform that process.

Over the past two decades, some of the brightest scholars in the discipline have done pioneering and trenchant work on race and ethnicity in music. These include Ana Alonso-Minutti, Naomi André, Olivia Bloechl, Philip Bohlman, Julie Brown, John Corbett, Ryan Dohoney, Nina Eidsheim, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Eduardo Herrera, Ellie Hisama, Samuel Floyd, Andy Fry, Sumanth Gopinath, Miki Kaneda, Harald Kisiedu, Ralph Locke, Alejandro Madrid, Gayle Murchison, Carol Oja, Gascia Ouzounian, Jann Pasler, Benjamin Piekut, Eric Porter, Pamela Potter, Ronald Radano, Nancy Yunhwa Rao, Shana Redmond, Guthrie Ramsey, Marta Robertson, Braxton Shelley, Catherine Parsons Smith, Jason Stanyek, Marie Thompson, and Judy Tsou.

Even so, much work remains, particularly in an intersectional mode. The call for papers for this issue encouraged authors to

address the nexus of race, ethnicity, and music in local, national, international and/or transnational contexts . . . creative practice (composition, improvisation, performance); historiography and discourse; identity, representation, and canon; technology, curation, media and social media discourses; sound and timbre; and production, consumption, pedagogy, listening, and reception . . . interdisciplinary intersections with discourses and practices of gender and sexuality; religion and spirituality; class, diaspora, decolonization, difference, and ability; politics, economics, globalization, migration, and institutional practices.¹⁸

There are also new archives to probe, as shown by historian Sarah Haley’s reading of the archives of black women prisoners at Parchman Penitentiary in Mississippi as a blues archive in exploring technologies of the carceral state.¹⁹

It is clear that no single special issue can address even a fraction of these topics; sustained, focused, and diverse attention is needed. If we follow Spivak’s sense that “[C]reality . . . will yield us a history and a world,”²⁰ we would hope that the work in this issue joins that of the scholars listed above to inspire and pique interest, and that others will follow in pursuing that new history and that new world.

17. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “World Systems and the Creole,” *Narrative* 14, no. 1 (January 2006): 102–12, here 106.

18. “JAMS Special Issue on Race and Ethnicity: Call for Articles,” University of California Press website, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://jams.ucpress.edu/content/jams-special-issue-race-and-ethnicity-call-articles?survey=1>.

19. Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

20. Spivak, “World Systems and the Creole,” 106.