

# Ibero-American Music and the Music History Curriculum: Reform, Revolution and the Pragmatics of Change

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In the fall of 2015, the Ibero-American Music Study Group (IAMSG) hosted a roundtable panel at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in Louisville, Kentucky. Titled “Strategies and Opportunities for Greater Inclusion of Ibero-American Music in the Curriculum,” the roundtable was organized as a response to panel discussions about the core curriculum for both the undergraduate music major and the graduate musicology student that took place at the 2014 AMS/SMT meeting in Milwaukee.<sup>1</sup> In Louisville, the IAMSG directly addressed concerns raised the previous year regarding the inclusion of musics outside of the Western European canon. In our discussion, we elected not to limit our focus to the undergraduate music history core, but instead to present strategies for the broad incorporation of Latin American and Iberian music across both the undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Five scholars shared their vision and expertise on the panel: Walter Clark, Ana Alonso-Minutti, Drew Edward Davies, Jacqueline Avila, and Alejandro L. Madrid. Discussion following the presentations was spirited and somewhat contentious, leading four of the panelists (Alonso-Minutti, Davies, Avila, and Madrid) to further hone their thoughts into the essays gathered here. Each of these authors tackles the pragmatics and the politics of curricular change, reflecting on the process—as well as the impacts—of increased access to and integration of Latin American and Iberian musical content at all levels of musicological and music history education. Acknowledging the challenges that have historically inhibited non-specialists from engaging with Latin American and Iberian repertoires in the classroom (problems of material access, linguistic

1. At the 2014 AMS/SMT conference in Milwaukee, Colin Roust and Douglas Seaton co-chaired a panel sponsored by the AMS Pedagogy Study Group titled, “The End of the Music History Sequence?” with presentations by J. Peter Burkholder, Don Gibson, and Melanie Lowe. The AMS Committee on Career-Related Issues sponsored the panel, “What Do We Want Them to Know? Teaching ‘Introduction to Musicology’ in a Changing Field” chaired by Olga Hadley with presenters Charles M. Atkinson, Suzanne Cusick, Judith Peraino, and Richard Taruskin.

difficulties with primary sources, and a general lack of familiarity due to long-standing marginalization of these repertoires and cultural histories within the discipline),<sup>2</sup> the authors outline best practices, opportunities for improved access, and innovative pedagogical models, at the same time that they consider the epistemological impact of curricular change.

Founded in 1993, the IAMSG did more than bring together like-minded scholars with shared research interests. The group's founding was also a collective response to perceived marginalization at national meetings of the American Musicological Society. These political origins have shaped the group's expansive approach to geography (Spain, Portugal, New Spain, Latin America, the Philippines, U.S.-based Latinx musics, etc.); historical period (medieval through present day); repertory (chant through hip hop); and methodology (source studies through ethnography).<sup>3</sup> The resulting coalition of scholars was also necessarily driven by a concern for curricular inclusion. Vibrant discussions on the topic have been ongoing since the group's founding in 1993, when the first panel addressing curricular concerns was organized. Subsequent panels on curriculum took place in 1997, 2011, and in 2015, when this collection of scholars convened to discuss the topic anew.<sup>4</sup>

The intellectual ferment that marked the 1990s and the many discipline-wide conversations regarding the expansion, deconstruction, or radical refashioning of the music history curriculum had a particularly poignant impact on scholars in our subfield, many of whom saw the wider epistemological changes taking place as offering an opportunity to decrease widely-perceived marginalization. Opinions on what this would mean in practice, however, were quite varied, as some were motivated by the chance to finally have "their" composers and repertoires included within the canon while others saw the changes as an opportunity to transform the entire system from the inside out.

In 2009, J. Peter Burkholder published "Music of the Americas and Historical Narratives,"<sup>5</sup> in which he discussed his decision to expand the repertoire covered in the W.W. Norton *A History of Western Music* and its accompanying

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2. See J. Peter Burkholder's discussion of these problems of access in "Music of the Americas and Historical Narratives," *American Music* 27/4 (Winter 2009): 399-423.

3. Throughout this collection of essays, various authors use different terminologies to refer to people of Latin American descent living in the United States (e.g., "Latinx," "Latina/o," "Latin@"). These differences are representative of the diverse conventions currently practiced within the field of Latin American Studies.

4. For more information regarding these panels and their participants see footnote 1 in Ana R. Alonso-Minutti's essay here.

5. The paper began as a keynote address for "Music of the Americas: A Transcontinental Conference" at the University of North Texas, February 24, 2007. Burkholder, "Music of the Americas," 419.

anthology.<sup>6</sup> In that piece, Burkholder describes his decision to increase musical content from the Americas as an effort to reweave the larger historical narratives being told about “Western music” in order to create a more complex trans-Atlantic tale of musical, cultural, and political influence. “If our focus in writing and teaching music history is not only on what is new but is on what is common practice at a certain time, not only on composers but on performers and audiences,” writes Burkholder, “then music of the Americas turns out not to be peripheral to the history of Western music but an integral part of the story.”<sup>7</sup> Burkholder argues that focusing on musics of the Americas and their transnational networks illuminates the complex relationships between music, politics, and geography. His description, near the end of the article, of the postnational nature of mid-twentieth-century musical sound is one of the most poignant discussions of the topic in print.<sup>8</sup> Not present in Burkholder’s paper is a discussion of, or judgment on, the canon itself. He does recognize, however, that the *Norton Anthology of Western Music* essentially constructs it, forming “a body of works college-trained students are likely to know” and noting that “all of the principal alternative textbooks in English on the market were written in response to this text and this anthology.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, while he calls for a more nuanced telling of the canon’s tale, he does not advocate for its replacement.

The epistemological power of the canon itself was addressed in 2011 at the annual meeting of the Society for American Music, where the Latin American and Caribbean Interest Group sponsored a panel titled, “Music of the Americas and the College Curriculum.”<sup>10</sup> There, Alejandro L. Madrid and Brenda Romero each presented papers while Peter Burkholder provided a response. In their papers, Madrid and Romero both called for a refashioning of music historiography, with Madrid pushing for a postnational approach that would privilege the treatment of musical sound within a cultural studies framework, and Romero advocating for historical models that would seek greater contextual understandings of the relationship between music and its social and political environment. That same year, Madrid, along with George E. Lewis, Gayle Sherwood Magee, Sherrie Tucker, and Robert Fink, continued to address these questions in a collection of essays convened by Charles Hiroshi Garrett and

6. J. Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2009).

7. Burkholder, “Music of the Americas,” 406.

8. Burkholder, “Music of the Americas,” 418-419.

9. Burkholder, “Music of the Americas,” 399-400.

10. The panel was chaired by Jennifer L. Campbell. For a summary of the discussion that took place in the 2011 meeting, see Jennifer L. Campbell, “2011 Meeting of the Music of Latin America and Caribbean Interest Group: Music of the Americas and the College Curriculum,” *Bulletin of the Society for American Music* XXXVII/3 (Fall, 2011).

Carol J. Oja in the pages of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*.<sup>11</sup> There, Madrid expanded upon many of the same issues that he spoke about at the SAM meeting the previous spring. He went on to critique the academy's dependence on ideologies of "conservation," in which a canon of works is maintained in order to reinforce an aesthetic value system, and he attacked revisions to that canon as essentially tokenism, maintaining that reformist strategies cannot achieve what he saw as critical epistemological change.

These past conversations, both face-to-face and on the page, undeniably shaped the 2015 IAMSG roundtable, the vibrant and sometimes contentious debate that followed it, and the resulting essays that are included here. Many of the panel participants and members of the audience were surprised by how—even though it was not the *raison d'être* for the panel—the unresolved question of the canon dominated much of the ensuing debate. This collection of essays hardly resolves this question. However, in addressing epistemology and not merely content, each author here challenges and unsettles previously entrenched curricular hegemonies.

The IAMSG's focus on "inclusion" can be understood in multiple ways. Alonso-Minutti, Avila, and Davies all ponder, in one way or another, the potential impacts on teaching and learning that can result from the incorporation of Ibero-American musics across the curriculum. Madrid, by contrast, implicitly critiques inclusionary discourse as potentially complicit in the construction of ideological hegemony. "Inclusion" can, and often does, infer the granting of permission, a sense that someone or something has been "allowed in" to play according to the rules of the larger group. Such circumstances could, indeed, lead to tokenism, as Madrid cautions in these pages. Inclusion can also be used in a much more direct manner, however, simply to mean "to take part" or "to be present." Being mindfully present is, of course, no less an act of political positioning than is asking to be allowed in or, for that matter, boycotting the activity altogether. Neither should inclusion be perceived as being synonymous with assimilation, and the pedagogies outlined here illustrate the productively transformative potential of introducing new musical and cultural paradigms into the music curriculum.

These essays are not intended as a curricular guide, but rather as a reflection on best practices. Focusing on pedagogical *process* rather than the content itself, these four essays do not attempt to cover Latin American and Iberian music in a comprehensive way. Instead, each author responds to particular challenges of teaching Ibero-American repertoires within diverse institutional contexts.

11. The collection of essays was convened to address the study of U.S. music in its broadest sense. See Charles Hiroshi Garrett, Carol J. Oja, George E. Lewis, Gayle Sherwood Magee, Alejandro L. Madrid, Sherrie Tucker, and Robert Fink, "Studying U.S. Music in the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/3 (Fall 2011): 689-719.

While issues of access are still present in the field, the problem (at least for non-specialists) is no longer how to gain access to Latin American and Iberian musics, but rather how to make sense of what are now ample, and expanding, resources. The authors here provide models for employing these considerable resources, whether digital humanities sites, international films, critical frameworks, or scholarly analysis.

Begun as a roundtable during the presidential primary and coming to press during the first 100 days of Donald J. Trump's presidency, this collection of essays was produced in a period profoundly marked by politics. The 2015-2016 academic year witnessed the presidential primary campaigns, protests against structural and behavioral racism that rocked the University of Missouri, Yale University, and other college campuses; the ongoing activism of the Black Lives Matter movement; universities' confrontation with the gun lobby over "Campus Carry" bills in Texas, Georgia, and other states; and legislative attempts to limit rights and access to members of the LGBTQ community (Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and South Dakota) and the undocumented (Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina). 2016 ended with a referendum between establishment and change, between experience and passion, between rationality and morality, between reform and revolution. When we convened our roundtable in November, 2015, I very much doubt that anyone imagined where the national tension between reform and revolution would eventually take us. In hindsight, however, the dialectical tension that so marked our political discourse in 2015 and 2016 parallels recent rhetorical clashes about the need to reform or transform the musicological landscape generally and the music history curriculum in particular. Amid the passion and the partisanship, however, it has become clear that via reform or revolution, significant change—whether political and economic or academic and epistemological—cannot be realized without a keen and multifaceted understanding of how to build something else in its place. It is not the goal of this collection of essays to present a unified stance regarding the ideological imperatives that underlay the shaping of the music history curriculum. Rather, the authors included here provide concrete examples and curricular strategies at the same time as they address the larger disciplinary impacts of the work that we do.