



## Intercultural analysis as relational musicology

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Although musicologists as diverse as Regina Qureshi and Ingrid Monson have used the words 'relational' and 'musicology' in close proximity, 'relational musicology' yields no hits on Google. Yet increasingly that's exactly what I find myself doing. In analysing both multimedia and performance, my concern has been to get away from the idea of an originary 'text' that is expressed through other 'texts', and instead to understand them in terms of a network of interactions between multiple 'texts' and the meanings that are generated through those interactions. But if there is to be such a thing as relational musicology, then intercultural analysis must surely lie at its heart.

The non-relational approach is to develop modes of analysis that apply across different cultures because they are based on universally valid principles. Just putting it that way makes the problem obvious. Models like Jay Rahn's *A Theory for All Music*, like much music-psychological and music-philosophical research, are premised on specifically Western, or perhaps it would be better to say first-world, conceptualisations to which universal validity is imputed. There *are* universals; in performance, for example, gestalt-style principles involved in the construction of accent may well be an example, but the manner in which accents are structured and the meaning that arises from them are highly culture-specific (to the extent that, within a century, the performing styles on early recordings have become largely unintelligible). Another example, perhaps, is the morphologies of tension or affect created by the large-scale accelerandi equally characteristic of Rossini's overtures and South-East Asian music, though the manner in which such morphologies are discursively elaborated into emotion are again highly culture-specific. The point then is not to deny the existence of universal principles but to recognise their limitations.

The relational approach is to recognise that the intercultural analyses afforded by these relatively low-level principles represent transactions between cultures. As illustration, there is a tradition of applying linear analysis more or less loosely derived from Schenker to Asian music, which arguably had its origins in the claims of Schenkerian theory to embody universal musical principles and hence in a kind of cultural hegemony. But this would be the wrong way to understand, for example, Joseph Chan's analysis of *qin* music, where quasi-Schenkerian techniques are used to identify gestural shapes which Chan then

interprets in terms of the poetic meanings which *qin* culture associates with the music. While at one level the study of a genre of traditional Chinese music, at another level this represents the forging of a relationship between Asian cultural heritage and Western conceptualisation which has to be understood in terms of the current, if shifting, asymmetries in international academia. Reciprocally, insights from Asian music may help Western musicologists to understand aspects of their own traditions; in my forthcoming book on performance analysis I draw a parallel with *qin* tablature (which specifies multiple forms of vibrato while underdetermining rhythm) in order to clarify the ways in which Western notation under-specifies aspects crucial for the generation of meaning in performance. Each of these transactions can be seen as a form of intercultural sense-making that generates meaning through the alignment of different perspectives.

As the second of these examples shows, the analytical encounter with the other can be a means of understanding the self. But this is of course as much a musical as an analytical principle. I have elsewhere analysed the 'Hindustannie airs' created in colonial Lucknow and Calcutta through the transcription and arrangement for Western instruments of Indian music: to our ears these present an image of Indian music detectable less through its positive properties than rather through the disruption of Western tonal idioms, yet to those involved they seem to have sound more real than the real thing. They are neither Indian music nor Western music, but the traces of a sincerely attempted if ultimately unproductive transaction between the two, such that analysing them involves creating a triangular relationship between the shadowy Indian musicians, the less shadowy colonists, and ourselves as twenty-first-century interpreters. I conclude by showing how such a three-way encounter can be incorporated with the network model I have developed in the contexts of multimedia and performance analysis, on the basis of which intercultural analysis can be seen as the paradigm case of relational musicology.