

De-Canonizing Music History

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Edited by

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P U B L I S H I N G

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This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-1391-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1391-4

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of canonisation rose in the musicological agenda in the 1980s, together with a strong need to redefine the limits of the discipline. One of the most influential addresses in this discussion was delivered in the early 1990s, when a group of musicologists from the United States published an anthology entitled *Disciplining Music: Musicology and its Canons* (Bergeron and Bohlman 1992). In that book's epilogue, Philip V. Bohlman anticipated a new era for research in the field: the perspective of musicology was to shift from the model of studying *Die Musik* to many musics, and the critical gaze of the discipline was to focus on a variety of musical canons, including their mutual competition and interplay.

But what is canonisation? The title of Bergeron's and Bohlman's anthology reveals one possible reading. Whenever music is examined under a critical gaze, it is disciplined, ordered, and corrected; the canon functions as a basic tool in defining the scope of this disciplining. On one hand, the canon determines what music is worthy of study. On the other hand, it operates as a measure of the competence of the scholars. The canonised music is discussed and argued over; in this process, alternative conceptions of music may become secondary and marginal. It may even become the expert herself who is marginalized—unless she is strong enough to build a new canon. In fact, this is exactly what took place in musicology when “new,” or critical musicology began to shake the system in the 1980s, redefining music as an object of scholarly study, with numerous new canons emerging.

Today it would be hard to deny the progress that has been attained by the new scholarship on music. Many kinds of music are now studied from multiple perspectives, using a variety of methodological approaches that were only emerging by the time of *Disciplining Music's* publication. One indication of this manifold is the variety of perspectives in this collection. Based on a selection of papers read at the first *De-Canonizing Music History Symposium*, its various approaches strongly suggest a critical view on canonisation in music history.¹

In our book the inclusion of articles dealing with popular music is particularly notable. This is a trend that appears to be worldwide. In some countries (such as Finland), popular music has in fact passed classical and folk music in recent decades as the most studied genre in musicology. One

could argue that issues of canonisation are especially relevant in popular music studies because of both its multiperspectival nature and the indefiniteness of its object of study. In his introduction to a recent special issue of *Popular Music*, Motti Regev (2006, 2) even suggested that “canonisation, together with wider themes of cultural capital and artistic hierarchy, should be a major topic in popular music studies.”

At the time of our writing, there is a clear lack of studies in this topic area. One exception is Carys Wyn Jones’ *The Rock Canon* (2008). In her book, Jones makes a profound analysis of the canonical values in the reception of ten “classical” rock albums. She reveals multiple ways in which the reception of famous rock albums reflects the values, terms and mechanisms found in the reception of the canons of literature and classical music. However, Jones also argues that canonisation is a multidimensional process: there are inherent tensions involved that impede the formation and stability of a canon. The values typical of the canons of classical music, such as originality, seriousness, complexity, and the necessity of re-reading, are complemented by the values “more contingent to the reception of rock music albums, including rebellion, sonic originality, authenticity of performance...and contemporary relevance” (Jones 2008, 138–139). This suggests that canonisation assumes new forms by adapting to diverse value bases, constantly offering new material for the critical observer.

Reading through the chapters of this book, it is easy to notice how different musics have already formed their own canons. The main goal of editing this collection was to deconstruct these new canons: to describe, analyse and problematise them in their variety. While at it, we certainly cannot avoid constructing new ones. We accept that canonising belongs inherently to all scholarly (and without doubt, artistic) efforts. It is in an exploratory spirit that the following pages set out to pave new ways for discussion, rather than to define what and how music could be taken to mean in different historical frames of reference. While musical practices may be global, there is a wealth of possible vocabularies and categorizations through which they can be rationalised, and these concepts are dependent on the historical and cultural exigencies of the rationalisers.

It is a thin line between academic scholarship and education, and the canons function here, as well. It is by no means insignificant how music is defined in the curricula of the schools and music institutions, or what issues are taken to be important in the teaching of the history of each musical genre. Keeping its eye on cultural hegemony and its ideological consequences in music education, critique of canonisation may raise

important and fascinating questions, which have their special place in the thematic structure of this book.

Even if we would agree that all research and artistic practice of music seeks the conditions of canonisation, and this cannot be avoided, why should we care? One answer might be that examined consciously and critically, canons can be beneficial, for they may help us to grasp how music and music research are historically constructed and formulated. Therefore one of the challenges of this book is to use de-canonisation as a methodological tool on re-evaluation of history and historiography of music. Deconstruction of canons involves a possibility to frame new study objects, as well as a chance to re-interpret previous disciplinary truths.

There is no general consensus among music researchers on the usefulness or harmfulness of canonisation. Some scholars are more sensitive to finding new solutions to their problems outside the fixed boundaries; others feel more comfortable with the study objects that the discipline has focused on for generations. What suits the groundbreakers of the critical paradigm might not suit their colleagues who specialize in the minute examination of historical source materials. The latter may work critically within the bounds of a given canon, seeking new tools for new interpretations of the music canonised. A variety of approaches are thus needed to understand the dynamics of historical interpretation of different musical cultures. This is the reason why we did not want to compel any contributors of this anthology to break the canons: all were free to address any kind of problems within the disciplines of music history (including history of music education), with whatever approach they judged to be the best within the large thematic umbrella of de-canonisation. Despite (or rather because) of this freedom, we feel that the contributors have found new and fresh perspectives that deserve to be widely read and discussed.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part focuses on locating (or rather on relocating) the relationship between art music and popular music in light of alternative historical perspectives.

Derek Scott's article relocates the revolution of popular music to the nineteenth century, proclaiming that this, largely stylistic, revolution was driven by "the incorporation of music into a system of capitalist enterprise." From this revolution, new "art worlds were created," which meant among other things that popular music could establish its own canon as a "third type of music." Scott calls for systematic research on this phenomena: he encourages musicologists to take up studying it "in terms of a stylistic revolution, demonstrating how and why it challenged existing practices, detailing its rapid circulation as a commodity form, and showing how it established its own aesthetic conventions."

Alexander Carpenter's essay elaborates the picture of Arnold Schoenberg's relation to popular music. Beginning from the question of where popular music fits in discussion about this "arch-modernist," Carpenter reminds us that the canon of modernism has many faces: while Schoenberg certainly can be taken as an "introverted modernist," his "highbrow" comments on popular music should be considered in proper context. Carpenter argues that Schoenberg's position on popular music was not unequivocal: despite being known for his scorn of popular idiom, he also "sought and hoped for popularity, occasionally wrote in popular genres and styles," and admired some popular composers. Thus, instead of continuing to view Schoenberg as "a paragon of serious, modern music," Carpenter encourages us to "let him to step down from his pedestal and to recognize in his music and thought some meaningful intersections between the serious and popular."

The first part ends with Christopher Wilkinson's critique of the "master narratives" approach commonly used in undergraduate music history courses in the United States. Instead of continuing the Eurocentric canon defined in most study programs by Grout's seminal *A History of Western Music*, Wilkinson suggests a wider perspective that helps the students "to understand the complex realities of twenty-first-century American musical culture." Especially important would be to acknowledge the acculturation between the European and West African traditions: according to Wilkinson, Western art music should be considered as "co-equal in importance with traditions emanating from West Africa because those are equally central to the character of American music today." To follow this lead would demand "a radical re-examination of the learning outcomes of music history courses and the pedagogy by which to encourage students' mastery of them."

The second part of this book is dedicated to new readings of the canons of jazz history. Sonya Lawson's article shares Wilkinson's interest both in the pedagogical perspective and African-American music. However, Lawson focuses specifically on the canons of jazz pedagogy as reflected in jazz history textbooks. Finding that many of these books are "structured around genres" and promote a jazz canon that is "mostly populated by African-American men," she suggests a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, reading that could "inform students of the enormous variety of music contained under the umbrella term 'jazz'—a term that simultaneously defies categorization and defines it." This kind of reading would teach the students "how cultural concepts such as 'mainstream' and 'marginal' are constructed." In this way, jazz history could become "a gateway to teaching

students more sophisticated concepts about categorization, the canon, cultural context and how to discuss music.”

Pekka Gronow’s article focuses on re-categorisation of the jazz canon by concentrating on a specific historical phenomenon often neglected in historiographies. While the revivalist movement of New Orleans jazz has often been labelled as “turning back the clock,” Gronow is interested in its motivations, the sources of its repertoire, as well as its conceptions of jazz history. Noting parallels with other revivalist movements, Gronow suggests that many New Orleans jazz revivalists were motivated by their first experiences of hearing jazz from the records. Gronow suggests that this “was the first time when a significant number of European and American intellectuals became convinced that the roots of a new musical art could be discovered in Africa.” The revivalist movement thus “paved the way for a multi-cultural view of music, which would have been quite unthinkable before the Second World War.”

The third article of the second part approaches the subject of jazz canonisation through a case study. Kevin Fullerton describes the significance of one swing era “territory band” that has largely escaped the notions of jazz historiographers. Fullerton argues that exploring “these bands in detail helps gain a better idea of how the modern big band developed, and how the musicians at the time made careers out of performing.” He further suggests that in order to build an “understanding of how jazz musicians achieved popularity . . . and how the style of jazz spread throughout the United States” we need to “overdub” history and to “look at a broad spectrum of artists.”

Paul Carr’s article shifts the focus to more contemporary phases of jazz history. He addresses the “often underrated role jazz guitarist composers have played in redefining the jazz aesthetic, specifically through fusing jazz with other music forms.” Conceiving fusion jazz more as “an expression of cultural and social paradigms than an overt attempt to fuse the two styles,” Carr argues that the “dual tradition, commercial popularity, and perceived authenticity of guitarists such as [Larry] Coryell and in particular [John] McLaughlin, had a considerable impact on redefining the jazz genre” in the 1970s and beyond. The “eclectic fusion” represented by Coryell and McLaughlin did not just consist of experiments in style, but “assisted the creation of new stylistic rules for the jazz canon, which only a few years later would become formulaic and aligned to market requirements.”

The third part of our book is dedicated to alternative visions of canonisation in rock history. Chris Anderton launches this section with a reconsideration of the historiography of progressive rock. He picks up as

his examples Italian progressive rock and its “lay discourses,” which suggest that the local scene derived “from the experimentation of pre-existing Italian beat bands and musicians, and with the support of record labels, festivals, and magazines.” Like other European varieties, Italian progressive rock reflects a wide variety of influences. Anderton argues that progressive rock can be taken as a “pan-European” rather than merely as a British music form, and more as a “frame of mind” rather than as a clearly defined sub-style.

Holly Tessler’s article contests another core case of British rock music historiography. According to her, the tradition of “Beatle storytelling” offers an interesting case of “regularised” discourse. Revealing the story of the Beatles as both process and a product, Tessler argues that “storytelling, while clearly a narrativised, historicised process is also a *marketised* process,” and both aspects should be taken as “equal functions in our understanding of popular music as a construction of popular culture.”

In the article that ends the third part, Janne Mäkelä examines the dynamic relationship between musical-historical “now” and “then” in contemporary cultural industry. Approaching the cultural industry as a “memory industry,” Mäkelä argues that this industry celebrates the past in ways that carry “significant cultural, economic and symbolic values” that have not been recognised in popular music historiography. His two examples illuminate the continuity of the memory industry, as well as its inner dialectics. The first aspect is revealed in the “restorative” nostalgia of the Dallapé reunion in the 1950s, while the second is reflected in the two comebacks of Hurriganes in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the release of the feature film *Ganes* in 2007. According to Mäkelä, the latter can be taken to exemplify “reflective longing” as an alternative strategy for memory industry that uses the collective celebration of the mythical past as its asset. However, this kind of “celebration of pop history” also “reflects the changing understanding of just what culture is.” Through it, popular music can be seen as an “exciting cultural location where songs and performers construct ideas about national identity and cultural interaction,” looking for the past for “cultural controversies that used to be driving forces especially for rock music and its rebellious ethos.”

The final part of our book picks up the theme of music history and music education, anticipated earlier in Wilkinson’s and Lawson’s texts. However, the two articles printed here approach the subject more from the general music education standpoint, representing two approaches to the historical self-identification of the discipline.

Roberta Lamb’s article traces the inner dynamics of North American music education reform, revealing how gender plays “a role in the stories

we tell about music education scholarship and what we value in music education.” Following the birth of MENC (Music Educators National Conference), and especially focusing on Ruth Crawford Seeger’s seminal role in the formulation of its early agenda, and further moving to the changes in the policy of this organization and one of its critical alternatives, MayDay Group, Lamb argues that we should become conscious of the importance of “self-reflective process and self-critical practice” in providing historical accounts of the field.

David Hebert’s article continues the critical self-examination of music education history by arguing that “the work of mainstream educational leaders and institutions has typically taken centre stage” in official histories of the field. Music education history has thus neglected “examination of multicultural identities, social inequalities, and the experiences of common music learners among newly emergent genres outside formal educational contexts.” According to Hebert, research on the systems of power and ideology associated with institutionalisation is rarely encountered in historical accounts of music education. Because the historiography of the field lacks “narrative depth,” “both the ways that we go about doing historical research in music education, and the ways that we explain history to our students, may require substantial and immediate change.” Describing cases of hybrid music ensembles as exemplary “sites of musical innovation” and “potential wellsprings of new musical traditions,” Hebert argues that the “developments associated with the emergence and institutionalization of hybrid music genres merit inclusion” in the historiography of music education.

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Notes

¹ The symposium was organized at Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland, in cooperation between the departments of Music Education, Folk Music and Jazz Music, during November 29–December 1, 2007.

PART I

RE-LOCATING ART AND POPULAR IN MUSIC

CHAPTER ONE

THE POPULAR MUSIC REVOLUTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A THIRD TYPE OF MUSIC ARISES

DEREK B. SCOTT

There may be readers who wonder what I mean by speaking of a popular music *revolution* in the nineteenth century, rather than in the twentieth century. I hope I will be able to demonstrate that such a term is not inappropriate, and also to make clear that I am referring to a revolution in musical style as well as genre. This revolution was driven by social changes and the incorporation of music into a system of capitalist enterprise: it resulted in a polarization between the style of entertainment music (or “commercial” music) and that of “serious” art. In this brief overview, I am going to select those key genres and styles that precipitated musical change at that time, and which continued to impact upon popular music in the next century. Indeed, one might argue that these changes meant that popular music became a different musical language, and one that came to be spoken in different dialects and with different accents. New art worlds were created, with the establishment of new musical conventions, new techniques, new organizations, and new networks of distribution.

This musical revolution in the nineteenth century meant that an understanding of the new popular music could not be expected of all musicians. One consequence was that the seamless incorporation of popular styles, as found in a work like *Die Zauberflöte*, was no longer a possibility. Nobody in the twentieth century would expect someone who could play Rodrigo’s Guitar Concerto to be equally adept at playing a 12-bar blues. In the nineteenth century, nobody would expect an opera singer to perform convincingly a *chanson réaliste*, or assume that a musician skilled in the classical symphonic repertoire would automatically be capable of giving a characteristic lilt to a Viennese waltz. The popular music revolution brought forth musical idioms whose difference in both

style and meaning from the classical repertoire created insuperable problems for those who were unfamiliar with the new conventions and lacked the particular skills demanded by the new styles.

The legacy is with us still. As I walked into the Volksoper in Vienna in September 2006, the usher saw that, behind my ticket for *Die Zigeunerbaron*, was another for *Lohengrin* at the Staatsoper. He expressed surprise and declared that they were two different worlds. Indeed, a case could be made that they are two different art worlds in Howard Becker's sense, though they overlap, as art worlds frequently do. Yet, I did not have to wait long to discover what it was that made opera and operetta distinct aesthetically. Almost immediately upon the opening of Act 1, Barinkay sings an irresistible, swinging waltz tune with a rhythmic zest that makes it almost impossible to keep the body still. Then I noticed the costumes; they were garish and theatrical, some containing deliberate clashes of colour. Soon, Zsupán the swineherd made his entrance accompanied by ten women dressed as little pigs, all wearing glittering tutus. During the course of Zsupán's song, they linked their arms and danced in a parody of *Swan Lake*. After this, I began to notice the unusual range of physical activity taking place—acrobatics and juggling, for example—but that was not the most significant feature. What I witnessed was that up-to-date movements associated with the most recent pop and dance performers were perfectly acceptable. It was also permissible to alter the original lyrics in order to incorporate topical allusions. All this told me two things: (1) deliberate vulgarity was relished as a means giving high culture a slap in the face; and (2) the popular revolution in the nineteenth century turned out to be a permanent revolution. Popular culture of the past enjoys a living relationship with popular culture of today: it retains, and continues to reach out to retain, an enthusiastic audience.

It was in the nineteenth century that the term “popular” in the modern Anglo-American sense arose and, most importantly, was used to designate a *third type* of music production. The consequence was that musical cultures in the West developed separate categories for classical (or serious) music, folk (or traditional) music, and popular (or entertainment) music. Although I would hold that the social-historical conditions in which a new artistic form develops should be regarded as of primary importance, I would also, if asked to name a composer crucial to the creation of a distinctive popular style, unhesitatingly pay tribute to Johann Strauss Sr. (1804–49). He established a new urban style of popular music that carved a middle way between the polished *divertimento* and *serenata* styles and traditional rustic styles. His music succeeded internationally because it was not music that required a localized environment or soil to flourish.

This was recognized by a reviewer at the première of his opus 109 waltzes (1839), who commented:

Seine neuen Walzer, betitelt “Exotische Pflanzen” sind auf jeden Fall perennirend, und werden auch jeden Theilen Europas, wohin sie verpflanzt werden, denselben Duft verbreiten, den sie hier entwickelten.”¹

[His new waltzes, entitled “Exotic Plants,” are all perennials, and will spread the same sweetness as they do here in every part of Europe where they are transplanted.]

Most accounts of the popularity of the dance music of nineteenth-century Vienna tend to concentrate on the social history of the period, but it is important, also, to analyze the musical features that constituted the new popular style. My contention is that “popular” referred, for the first time, not only to the music’s reception, but also to the presence of specific features of style. In Vienna the terms “entertainment music” (*Unterhaltungsmusik*) and “light music” (*leichte Musik*) were soon coined to act as descriptors of this particular musical character. This new categorization of music production was inextricably linked to the industrial production of sheet music and the growth of the music entertainment business; yet, significantly, it meant that it became possible for a composition to be popular in style without necessarily being popular in terms of commercial success.

Thus, the shift in meaning of “popular” provided critics with a means of condemning music that bore the signs of the popular—which they regarded as fashionable and facile (*leicht* in German means “easy”), rather than progressive and serious—whether or not such music enjoyed success in the market place. It was the nineteenth-century popular music revolution that coloured Adorno’s views: “From the middle of the nineteenth century on, good music has renounced commercialism altogether.”² Thus, it became an incontrovertible truth for modernists like Pierre Boulez that music written in a popular style was tantamount to music written for sale (the creation of “objects of musical consumption”) and, consequently, it was anathema to the twentieth-century composer of “serious” music.³

As a representative example of the difference between popular style in the old sense of its being something *of* the people and in the new sense of its being popular *with* the people, we might look at a tune from scene 4 of Jacques Offenbach’s early *opérette-bouffe*, *Le Financier et le Savetier* (1856). The refrain of the song entitled “Fable” is designed by both lyricist Hector Crémieux and the composer to be both simple and irritatingly memorable (Ex. 1-1). However, the simplicity it possesses is not that of a

rustic song or dance. Its words and its music have been carefully polished by professionals. Its very triviality is carefully designed to be a source of fun. The style is what one might call sophisticatedly trite: the falling chromatic semitones and the play on words in the given example demonstrate this. The cobbler of this fable works in a basement; hence, the repetitions of “cave” (basement or cellar) appear to make sense, and so we feel tricked and amused when we finally hear the word as the first part of “qu’avez vous” [what’s up with you?].

Ex. 1-1.” Fable,” “cave” refrain

Les voi - sins lui di - saient tous, Ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve,

ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve, Les voi - sins lui di - saient tous

Ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve, ca - ve, qu'a - vez - vous!

In brief, my argument is that the new forms of musical entertainment in London, Paris, New York, and Vienna changed perceptions completely about the nature of popular music and its perceived value. When Mozart wrote in a popular or folk-like style, it did not contradict the aesthetic values of his other music. After the popular music revolution, musical styles had arisen in commercial urban environments that could not be accommodated satisfactorily within the newly fashionable ideas about the existence of a tradition of “music of the folk.” When composers wrote in these popular commercial styles they often opposed and offended the values of those who defended high art or folk traditions. Yet, it was no mere gimmickry or perversity that prompted the development of new musical styles and genres, and the legacy of what happened in these nineteenth-century metropolises shaped twentieth-century forms of popular music in Europe and North America in important ways.

Vienna

I will now look at the new popular forms and briefly (and far too simply) explain the legacy of the stylistic revolution.⁴ Music for social dancing in Vienna, from the late 1820s on, provided infectious rhythms, novel orchestral timbres, and a new coloristic use of harmony (chords that took on a “free-floating” major sixth or major seventh); it also employed new melodic devices (yodel-like phrases, and leading-notes that fell instead of rising). It was in Vienna that what became known as “light music” was created, and the old *contredanses* were gradually ousted by dances for couples (the waltz and polka). Heinrich Jacob, in his biography of Johann Strauss Sr., declared, “till then no music had such demotic strength.”⁵

It was the public dance halls, not private balls (*Redoutes*), that determined the prevailing character of Viennese dance music in the 1830s. The popular dances were those that were popular with the bourgeoisie: the waltz, the polka (from Bohemia), which replaced the *galop* in popularity after 1840, and the *quadrille* (from France). Johann Strauss Sr. and Josef Lanner were each giving musical entertainments three evenings a week in the 1830s, their waltz nights proving the most successful and thus stimulating the further production of waltzes. Strauss and Lanner had achieved fame not only because their music was thrilling to dance to, but because they were also exciting to watch as violinists, with their double-stopping, wide leaps, portamento, and variety of bowing effects, such as spiccato, in which the bow bounces on the string. The idiomatic violin style is retained in waltz melodies by Johann Strauss Jr.: consider the typical violin grace notes in the first theme of *The Blue Danube*.

The popular style developed other novel musical features. Hubert Parry cites as a conspicuous feature of “second-rate music,” providing examples from “low-class tunes” (notice how the two are conflated), “an insistence on the independence of the ‘leading note’ from the note to which it has been supposed to lead.”⁶ The falling leading note in a subdominant context (the wienerische note) is a feature of Viennese waltzes. The tendency for the leading note to fall was because the sixth degree of the scale had attained a new importance in this music. Waltz 3b of Strauss Sr.’s *Sperls Fest-Walzer*, op. 30 (1829) is a very early example of the composer’s treatment of the sixth as an addition to the tonic chord in a way that scarcely demands resolution (Ex. 1-2). The emphasis on the sixth had clearly caught the ear of Wagner when writing for his *Rhinemaidens*.⁷ The tonic triad with added major seventh also begins to be accepted without

the need for resolution: consider the refrain of Adele's "laughing song" from *Die Fledermaus* at the words "ich die Sache, ha ha ha" (Ex. 1-3).

Ex. 1-2. *Sperls Fest-Walzer*

Ex. 1-3. Adele's "laughing song"

Adele

Ja sehr komisch ha, ha, ha, ist die Sache, ha, ha, ha, d'rum verzeih'n Sie, ha, ha, ha,

It is the accent on beat one that is crucial to the waltz, though there is often an accent on beat three also. The Ländler has a characteristic accent on beat two. The difference between Ländler and waltz can be heard in Strauss's *Frohsinn im Gebirge*, op. 26 (1829). The first waltz is a Ländler, the second is a waltz. Notice the characteristic melodic phrase endings on the second beat of the Ländler followed by a one-in-the-bar feel for the waltz (Ex. 1-4).

Ex. 1-6a. *Künstler-Ball-Tänze*

Ex. 1-6b. *Künstler-Ball-Tänze*

Memorable rhythmic motives frequently take precedence over melodic development, nowhere more so than in the first waltz of *Carnivals-Spende*, which is something between a yodel and a donkey’s bray. When examining Viennese waltz style, however, we should not neglect the importance of non-notated performance practices such as the anticipated second beat, the use of *accelerando*, strongly marked *ritardandi*, and so forth. They all require musical “feel,” just as do later features of popular music performance, such as “swing” and “groove.”

New York

In New York, blackface minstrelsy in the 1840s and 1850s provided popular music with a percussive character, a new type of syncopation, and a three-chord model—features inherited by a range of 20th-century styles

from blues to punk. Europeans first acquired knowledge of the music-making of African Americans through the distorting medium of blackface minstrelsy. In Germany, for example, some minstrel songs were published as genuine “Negro airs.” Minstrel troupes in the early period were seldom more than six strong. Following the example established by E. P. Christy, they sat in a semi-circle, and the characters at each end were named Tambo and Bones after the instruments they played (a tambourine, and castanets made from cow ribs).⁸ Known as the “corner men,” they were the comedians, and were questioned to humorous effect by the “interlocutor,” Mr. Johnson, who occupied the middle of the stage.

The enormous cross-class popularity of the songs of Stephen Foster (1826–64) effectively created a “national music” for America.⁹ His first big success, “Oh! Susanna” was first published under his own name in New York in 1848. The genre furnished an opportunity for black composers, and the first commercially successful black songwriter was James Bland (1854–1911), who worked for Haverly’s minstrels and whose songs included “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny” (1878)¹⁰ and “Oh, Dem Golden Slippers!” (1879)¹¹

Strauss Sr. was fond of syncopation, especially in his polkas and *galops* but the syncopated note is usually accented in the normal European manner of this period, unlike the novel kind of syncopation introduced in blackface minstrelsy. Note, for example, how in the minstrel song “Buffalo Gals” the accent is on the word “come,” rather than the word “out” (which falls on the syncopated note) (Ex. 1-7).

Ex. 1-7. “Buffalo Gals”

Allegretto

Buf - fa - lo gals, can't you come out to - night? can't you

come out to - night? can't you come out to-night?

Many of the early songs are dominated by repeated motives. An example is “Old Dan Tucker.” Call and response, which has become almost a defining a feature of black music making, is found in songs like Stephen Foster’s “De Camptown Races” and Dan Emmett’s “Dixie’s

Land.” There is also, from time to time, the presence of what today would be called blue notes, such as the flattened sevenths found in the Ethiopian Serenaders’ song “My Old Aunt Sally.” It might even be argued that the Virginia Minstrels set the pattern for the pop band containing four young men, which re-emerged in the later 1950s and early ’60s. Once again, the young men were white and leaning heavily on the practices of black musicians. Rock ’n’ roll is not a million miles from minstrelsy, as a quick comparison of “Old Dan Tucker” and “Jailhouse Rock” makes clear. In Ex. 1-8, the latter has been given in 2/4 time in order that the two may be more easily compared.

Ex. 1-8. “Dan Tucker” + “Jailhouse Rock” comparison

I come to town de udder night, I hear de noise den saw de fight, De
The wardenthrew a party in the County jail, The pri-son band was there and they be - gan to wail, The

watch - man was a runnin' roun', Cryin' Old Dan Tuc - ker's come to town, So
band was jumpin' and the joint be - gan to swing. You should -'ve heard those knocked out jail - birds sing. Let's

get out de way! ____ Get out de way! ____
Rock! ____ Let's Rock! ____ Ev-'ry-

Get out de way! ____ Old Dan Tucker, You're too late to come to supper.
bo - dy in the whole cell block ____ Was a - dan-cin' to the jailhouse Rock!

London

After mid-century, music hall in London became the driving force behind new and expanding networks of stage managers, lighting experts, venue managers, poster designers, and other related activity. While higher artistic forms were at this time becoming more and more objects of aesthetic contemplation, popular forms with a community base—such as music hall possessed in its early days—were more likely to offer participation. This is evident, for example, in the music hall song’s chorus, which demands that the audience all join in for it to yield its full effect. Music hall entertainment in the 1860s produced songs with a hook or catchy chorus coupled to a less-memorable, narrative-driven verse section. These were features inherited by Tin Pan Alley, twentieth-century dance bands, and Broadway musicals. Songwriting for the halls became professionalized, too, and composers and lyricists would be familiar with different types of character song (the swell song, the coster song, the rustic song) and the skills of particular performers. The star system was created, too, at first with the male stars of the halls, who were often promoted as the *lions comiques*. The type of variety entertainment provided by music hall in the later century influenced American vaudeville and was also taken over by the French, who even adopted the term music hall.

The “saucy” song with a sexual theme was part of music hall from its beginnings. The difficulty for those who morally disapproved was that suggestiveness was something awkward to pinpoint or prove. Take a song written, composed, and sung by the *lion comique* Arthur Lloyd, a song whose title is still a well-known saying in Britain today, “It’s Naughty but It’s Nice” (1873).¹²

I kiss’d her two times on the cheek,
I would have kiss’d her thrice,
But I whisper’d, ain’t it naughty?
She said, Yes, but it’s so nice.

The words are innocent enough, but the implication that naughtiness is nice brings with it moral concerns. This type of comic song was found abhorrent by the respectable middle class: “Destitute alike of wit and humour, even of the weakest description,” and “set to music of the most contemptible character.”¹³

Censorship was a blunt weapon when deployed against some performers. There is no doubt, for example, that it was the *way* the preeminent female star Marie Lloyd performed that had such an impact on her audience—the lack of bodily discipline seen in the gestures, winks,

and knowing smiles that she employed to lend suggestiveness to apparently innocent music hall songs, like “What’s That For, Eh?” (1892).¹⁴ Jacqueline Bratton draws a distinction between the innuendo of the broadside ballad and that of the music hall song:

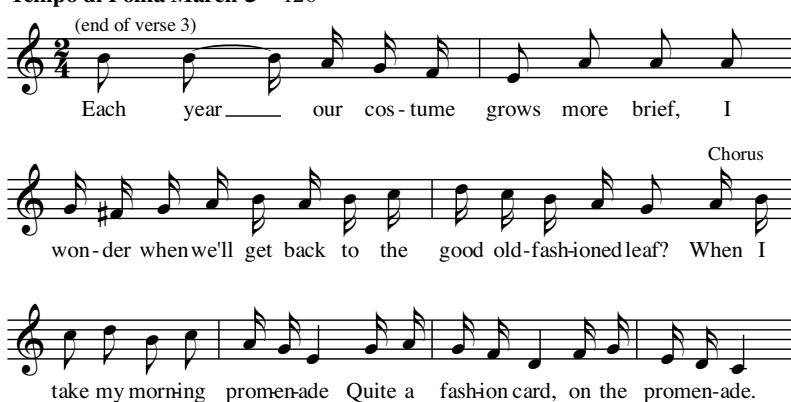
Where a broadside ballad making use of innuendo would most usually labour one point at length, wringing every last particle of fun out of a correspondence which had been set up or a train of puns which had been laid, music-hall songs of a very ordinary kind often had highly intricate and varied patterns of innuendo playing backwards and forwards across the text, even in printed versions, which would be supplemented a hundredfold by nuance and gesture in a good performance.¹⁵

One may imagine how Lloyd’s famous wink may have been applied to her singing of “A Little of What You Fancy Does You Good”¹⁶ and “When I Take My Morning Promenade.”¹⁷ In the latter, she acknowledges that her dress shows her shape just a little bit, but that’s “the little bit the boys admire.” This song is typical of music hall in its narrative verses and sing-along refrain (Ex. 1-9).

Ex. 1-9. “When I Take My Morning Promenade”

Tempo di Polka March ♩ = 120

(end of verse 3)



Each year — our cos-tume grows more brief, I

won-der when we'll get back to the good old-fashioned leaf? When I

take my morning promen-ade Quite a fashion card, on the promen-ade.

There may be little that is found surprising in this account of the knowingness of music hall performers, which so often created what Peter Bailey terms a “potent sense of collusion” between themselves and their audiences.¹⁸ We may automatically contrast this behaviour with a supposedly tight-laced and repressed bourgeoisie, but perhaps that is an

assumption asking to be challenged. Edward Pigott, Examiner of Stage Plays for the Lord Chamberlain, informs the Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment in 1892,

generally, it is towards the West End of the town, and amongst richer, idler, and more fashionable audiences that a famished manager would prefer to seek in scandal and indecency the means of replenishing an exhausted treasury.¹⁹

In the mid-1880s, however, the composer Frederick Corder chooses to put the blame for the vulgarity of music hall on those whom he regards as a dim-witted, indiscriminating crowd:

I was only too clearly convinced that this was the musical food which our masses truly loved and enjoyed, not because they could get no better, but because it was most suited to their intelligence—to their minds, in fact, if I may venture to use such an expression.²⁰

Paris

Cabaret of the 1880s in Paris presented songs with hard-hitting and socially concerned texts, precursors of later protest songs in a mixture of folk and popular style (for example, those of Bob Dylan) and various later forms of “realist” song (for instance, Jacques Brel’s “Amsterdam,” or Radiohead’s “Creep”).

The Montmartre cabarets fostered a unique atmosphere of elitism mixed with rebellion, in which social satire was nurtured and bourgeois values were ridiculed. A *chanteur* was someone who simply sang songs; a *chansonnier*, on the other hand, was a singer-poet—though this did not necessarily entail composing the music. The first and most important of the *cabarets artistiques* was the Chat Noir, which opened in 1881. The *chansonnier* Aristide Bruant (1851–1925) made his reputation there, and his image is still well known, thanks to the poster art of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. His impact on popular music, especially his development of the genre of the *chanson réaliste* (influenced by reading Zola) has received much less attention.²¹ Bruant’s method of distancing himself from emotional involvement had a lasting effect in cabaret.

Bruant sang of the dispossessed and disaffected, building a celebrated repertoire of songs of the *barrières*: “A la Villette,” “A Grenelle,” “A la Chapelle,” “A la Bastille,” and others. The original barriers were taxation points for those entering the city with goods; the *faubourgs* (suburbs) were home to the Parisian working class. Bruant, himself, was of provincial middle-class origin and knew nothing of the *faubourgs* before the age of

17. In fact, he confesses that he was at first shocked by the slang he heard there, but was soon attracted to its originality, its liveliness, brutality and cynicism.²²

To choose a typical example of Bruant's output, "A la Villette" (1885) has a trite tune and banal rhythm that, along with Bruant's unflinching, deadpan delivery,²³ act as a perfect match for the monotonous and impoverished existence of its "anti-hero" Toto Laripette, and increase the sense of brutality as the song ends with his neck held ready for the guillotine (Ex. 1-10). There is no overt indignation, though it is implied, and there is no judgmental attitude. This is confirmed by Bruant's own two recorded performances. Unlike Marie Lloyd songs, with their tuneful sing-along choruses, this chanson does not offer any lengthy repeated refrain; nothing holds up the narrative; therefore, its dramatic character is intensified.

Ex. 1-10. "A la Villette"

Andantino

Il a - vait pas en-cor' vingt ans, — I con-nais - sait pas ses pa-
rents, On l'ap-p'lait To - to La - ri - pette, A la Vil - let - te.

A quality that makes the cabaret chansons different from those of the café-concert is their ability to turn at any moment from broad and inoffensive lyrics to the harshest social realism, as Bessière exemplifies in "Les Morphinomanes," perhaps the first song about drug addiction:

A la morphine chaque jour,
Elles se piqu'nt avec amour
Chacqu' parti' du corps tour à tour,
En vicieuses courtisanes.²⁴

[Every day they prick lovingly with morphine each part of the body in turn,
like lecherous courtesans.]

The new type of artistic cabaret that arose in Montmartre engaged with the contradictions and complexities of modernity, and spread quickly throughout Europe in the early twentieth century (to the Quatre Gats,