

Study Day on intercultural music: Bali-Quebec and Beyond



This Study Day takes as its starting point the music of composers of concert music in Quebec who, beginning in the early 1970s, became spellbound by the gamelan musical traditions of Indonesia, particularly that of the island of Bali. Composers such as José Evangelista (1943), Gilles Tremblay (1932), John Rea (1944), and the best-known composer of their cohort, Claude Vivier (1948-1983), travelled to the region and studied with local masters and subsequently produced a considerable corpus of works inspired by the structure and sonorities of gamelan repertoire, including Vivier's *Pulau Dewata* (1977) and Evangelista's *Ô Bali* (1989). The day also expands outward to encompass other transcultural gestures in contemporary music, including the works commissioned by the Evergreen Club Gamelan, and Sandeep Bhagwati's intertraditional music and contemporary concert music in Asian regions including Bali, to give but a few examples. Yayoi Uno Everett has argued that "as the repertory of art music has moved beyond the Orientalist and exotic paradigms of cultural appropriation, it invites a careful negotiation between collective discourses and individual subjectivities,"¹ a negotiation which will return as a leitmotif in the day's explorations. Understanding the logic of inspiration/assimilation that characterizes the Bali-Quebec corpus, as well as many other analogous transcultural situations, brings out the cultural specificity of each artistic response. As Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh have noted in their path-breaking

¹ Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau eds., *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press), 2.

volume *Western Music and its Others*, modernist composers who incorporate elements of musical ‘others’ in their work “are transforming that music through incorporation into their own aesthetic: appropriating and re-presenting it.”² This day focusses on processes of transculturation and the aesthetic, political and ethical quandaries that they imply. The questions that might be posed with respect to the different repertoires explored over the course of the day include: How is knowledge of the music of other cultures obtained? What mechanisms of translation or transcription come into play? What categories do composers and performers use to conceptualize their creative activity? Can an intercultural work be heard as a hybrid? How is the creative process shaped by regionally-specific artistic narratives? How can an ethics of representation of the non-Western in Western concert music repertoire be conceived?



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² Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh eds., *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 15.