

Gateways to Understanding Music

TIMOTHY RICE and DAVE WILSON



Second Edition



GATEWAYS TO UNDERSTANDING MUSIC

Gateways to Understanding Music, Second Edition, explores music in all the categories that constitute contemporary musical experience: European classical, popular, jazz, and world music. Covering the oldest forms of human music making to the newest, this chronology presents music from a global rather than a Eurocentric perspective. Each of 60 “gateways” addresses a particular genre, style, or period of music. Every gateway opens with a guided listening example that unlocks a world of music through careful study of its structural elements. How did the piece come to be composed or performed? How did it respond to the social and cultural issues at the time, and what does that music mean today? Students learn to listen to, explain, understand, and ultimately value the music they encounter in their world.

New to this edition is a broader selection of musical examples that reflect the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion advocated by North American universities. Eight gateways have been replaced. A timeline of gateways helps students see the book’s historical narrative at a glance.

Features

- **Values orientation**—Diverse, equitable, and inclusive approach to music history.
- **All genres of music**—Presents all music as worthy of study, including classical, world, popular, and jazz.
- **Global scope within a historical narrative**—Begins with small-scale forager societies up to the present, with a shifting focus from global to European to American influences.
- **Recurring themes**—Aesthetics, emotion, social life, links to culture, politics, economics, and technology.
- **Modular framework**—60 gateways—each with a listening example—allow flexibility to organize chronologically or by the seven themes.
- **Consistent structure**—With the same step-by-step format, students learn through repeated practice how to listen and how to think about music.
- **Anthology of scores**—For those courses that use the textbook in a music history sequence.

Gateways to Understanding Music continues to employ a website to host the audio examples and instructor’s resources.

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To the many people who have taught us to love all the world's music, and to those at the institutions where we have taught who have allowed us and inspired us to experiment with the ideas in this book, with gratitude.



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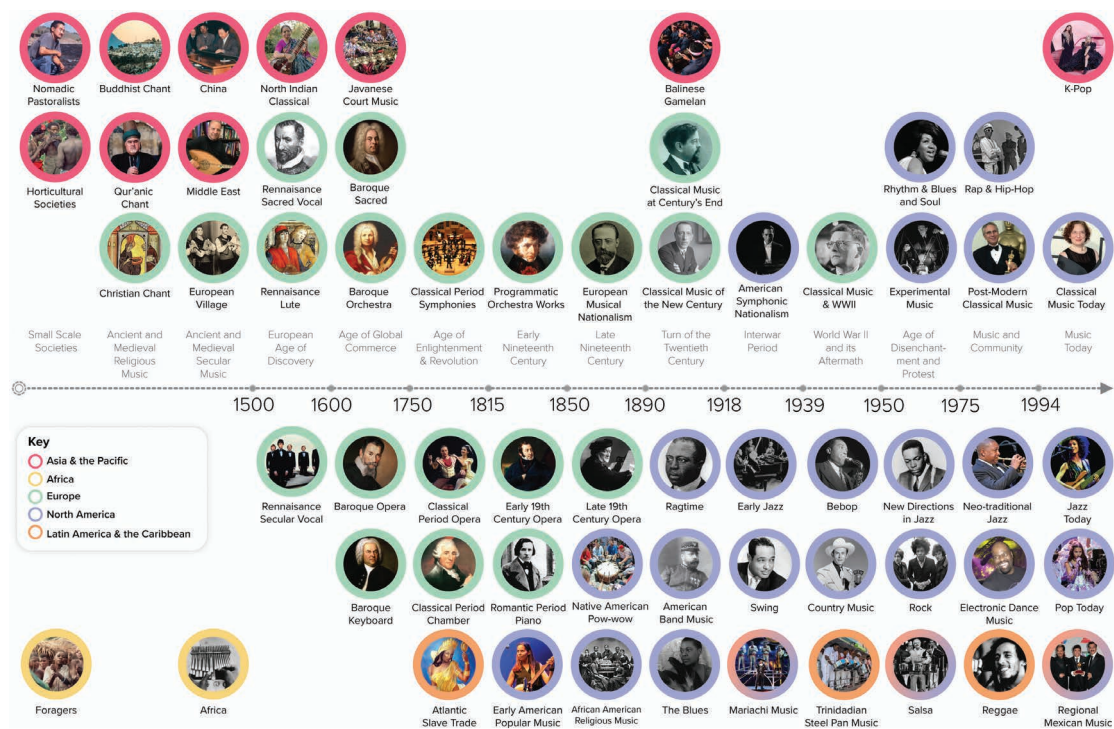
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TIMELINE



PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Gateways to Understanding Music is designed for introductory music appreciation and music history courses dedicated to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Traditionally, these courses have placed the history of European classical music at the center of the narrative and either omitted or placed on the margins popular music, jazz, and the music of communities defined by ethnicity, race, nationality, and religion. In this book we retain the historical approach of most textbooks that serve these kinds of courses, but we decenter European classical music, placing it in an equitable relationship to all the other kinds of music that contribute to musical and cultural life today.

To achieve our goals, we have integrated music from various traditions into a chronological narrative that includes European classical music, jazz, pop, rock, country, reggae, regional Mexican music, North Indian classical music, Javanese and Balinese gamelan, soul, salsa, and much more. This approach yields many exciting and unexpected pairings and juxtapositions of musical styles and genres. These juxtapositions illustrate fascinating similarities and differences in the way musicians have responded to the cultural, social, political, and economic conditions of their time and place. It allows us to make the case that all forms of human music making are worthy of careful listening and study. And it provides timely and relevant choices for today's students.

MUSIC APPRECIATION courses with the history of European classical music at the center too often carry with them implicit claims about white supremacy in the musical domain. These courses suggest, often explicitly, that the classical music composed by European men is more worthy of study, more beautiful, more sophisticated, and superior to the kinds of music left out of the course or placed on its periphery. These claims are not tenable in university settings and can cause harm in the context of the social and political life of multicultural, multiethnic, multi-racial societies. In this book, we provide the theoretical perspectives and pedagogical tools that instructors need to transform these traditional music appreciation courses from harmful ones into ones that serve the common good and the shared values needed to live peacefully and thoughtfully in these kinds of societies.

MUSIC HISTORY courses for music majors need a similar restructuring. They should begin by asking this question: the history of what music? For most music students today the answer would typically be "the history of the music you are studying to play, compose, and teach," unless you are a jazz major. But this is the wrong answer for instructors, courses, and departments and schools of music seeking to expand their approach to music study to make it more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. It is the wrong answer because it closes off the possibility of recruiting a diverse group of music majors from all the many communities that form a multicultural nation and who might be interested in the full range of music being made in the world today.

An answer that would improve the chances of recruiting a diverse student body would be "the history of the music of our time and place." That repertory would include virtually every kind of music in the world, not because it is over there, not because it is "world music," but because it is performed and valued by some segment of the population in many countries today. The diversity

of music included in this book, and the even-handed, equitable approach we take to each example, create the ground on which an ethical study of music can be built both for majors and nonmajors.

We as authors and teachers believe that the ethical study of music must be inclusive. It needs to include all the music of the society in which students and instructors live and, we would argue, all the music of a world defined by its interconnections. When instructors base their courses and curricula on an aesthetics that excludes vast amounts of music, they end up with an ethics that excludes all the people who make those excluded kinds of music. This book begins with an ethics of inclusion. As a matter of principle, we think all of humankind, all of society, should be welcome to study music in music departments and schools. But if potential students' music is excluded from the curricula of music departments and schools, they won't come to study music in those institutions. This book transforms our inclusive ethical principle into an inclusive aesthetics. We believe all music is worthy of study, and we include as much of it as we can. Instead of advocating for the study of beautiful music, we advocate for the study of the music that makes all of humanity beautiful.

NEW IN THE SECOND EDITION

This second edition makes clear our dedication to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. New gateways on rhythm & blues and soul and on Native American pow-wow drumming, singing, and dancing fill two gaping holes in the first edition. A revised gateway on experimentalism in classical music and a new one on electronic dance music allow us to include African American contributions to these musical styles and to highlight the musical life of LGBTQ+ communities to a greater extent. New gateways on American pop music of today and K-pop bring the narrative up to date and extend it out into the world. The second edition contains the same number of chapters and gateways as the first edition. To make room for the new gateways, we moved a few gateways dealing with European classical music to the book's website. We think the result of these choices is an even more interesting and equitable story about musical life today in many countries of the world.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Presenting this vast range of music in a historical narrative presented us with a number of interesting challenges. One problem is that some musical traditions have a detailed written history captured in musical notation and written commentaries while other traditions lack a history that predates the advent of sound recordings in the late nineteenth century. We solve this problem in two ways. First, our historical narrative centers on recordings rather than written compositions. Where we can, we foreground the performers and performances of music in written traditions along with the composition they are performing. So we analyze a modern recorded performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as much as or more than we analyze the composed structure of the score from 1808. Focusing on recordings puts written and aural traditions on a similar footing and solves one problem associated with bringing this vast array of music together in one book.

Second, our focus on recordings means that all the music in this book is, in an important sense, contemporary music. No matter when a piece was, or might have been, composed, today the recordings of it mentioned in this book are accessible to listeners nearly everywhere in the world. Even if the recordings are part of "the music of our time and place," we think historical narratives are still valuable, not least for the easily understood storytelling arc they provide. But creating a historical narrative around the date of the selected recordings makes no sense. To solve that problem, the musical recordings are presented in the order in which some important aspect of the tradition they represent entered human history. For example, we use a newly composed song by Rhiannon Giddens recorded in 2017 as a gateway to the fiddle-and-banjo tradition so important to early nineteenth-century American musical life. We could have used a recording of an old fiddle tune notated in the 1840s in a fiddler's handwritten tunebook, but we think the Giddens recording allows us to tell a more interesting story. In another example, we begin our historical narrative with

a recording from the 1980s of Central African foragers not because we believe this song or their way of singing is the oldest in the world, but because foraging, and the kind of social and musical life it supports, is the oldest extant form of human food production in the world.

Bringing this array of music together in one book creates problems not only for us, its authors, but for instructors who are not experts in all of these traditions (and doesn't that include all of us?). To solve this problem, this book uses a modular structure and a consistent pedagogy that enables trained musicians, no matter their specialty, to teach effectively using this book. Our modules are called "gateways." There are three to six gateways in each of fourteen chapters. Every gateway has the same structure and takes the reader on a path toward understanding the music of a particular time or people or place or genre.

Each gateway is unlocked by a single recording of music. By beginning with listening, we mimic and formalize the informal and direct way everyone encounters and learns about music in their everyday lives: hearing it on the radio or watching it on TikTok, attending a concert or music festival, or having a friend introduce a favorite artist or musical genre on YouTube or Spotify. Listening carefully to a gateway recording opens up a world of music and all of its rich meanings, histories, and legacies, whether that world is the European Classical period, Chinese music, country music, or an improvisation by John Coltrane.

FIVE QUESTIONS

In everyday life, listening to a new recording or attending a concert often leads the curious to ask questions about this new experience, and that is what each gateway of this book does. Each gateway asks—and answers—the same five questions:

- What is it?
- How does it work?
- What does it mean?
- What is its history?
- Where do I go from here (to explore this world of music)?

Every gateway is organized with the same step-by-step format, starting with listening and moving to musical, cultural, and historical explanations. As the content changes, the similarity of structure creates a welcome sense of familiarity and reinforces the basic analytical and descriptive methods the book conveys. This gateway model, with its consistent and repeated pedagogical structure, allows us to achieve one of the book's goals: to teach students how to ask and answer questions about music. We hope to stimulate curiosity about music by, first of all, asking questions about it. Asking questions is, after all, the first act of a curious mind.

The five questions that organize each gateway are ones that mirror the ways that students encounter and discover music in their lives today. Each gateway, instead of starting with pages of historical context or explanation, begins with listening. Instead of prompting students to ask questions that might be typical of their everyday listening practice (for example, do I like it or not?), we guide them through questions that move beyond taste and aesthetic preference. These questions unlock new understandings, help students acquire knowledge, and cultivate in them an attitude of openness to new ways of making and listening to music. We believe these goals provide the foundation of an ethical approach to courses in music appreciation and music history today.

The instructor's main task becomes helping their students navigate through this familiar and repeating structure and understanding the many links between the book's text and the gateway recording. The answers to the first two questions—What is it? and How does it work?—don't demand that the instructor has deep historical and cultural knowledge of the world of a particular genre or style or recording. Instructors with musical training in any area can help students answer these questions. That training is the only necessary prerequisite for teaching effectively with the assistance of this book. These first two questions guide students through deep and detailed listening as they learn to describe and explain musical sound using the elements of music (timbre, melody, rhythm, and so on). Instructors can help their students understand the

book's explanations of the elements of music and help connect these elements and related terms to the students' listening experience. Equipped with this new understanding of ways to listen to music, students can read on their own the answers to the next two questions in the gateway: What does it mean? and What is its history? The fifth question is Where do I go from here? In other words, what else can I listen to or read about if I am interested in this kind of music, and how can I learn more about the world of music opened up by this gateway? The suggestions for further study in this section are ideal prompts for students to journey farther down the path into a musical world in class discussions and writing assignments. This modular structure allows instructors with widely varying expertise in the musical traditions, genres, and styles we introduce in the book to be successful teachers with this book as their aid. The structure also provides instructors with a useful model for structuring their own lectures. Doing so could add to the coherence of a course.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

To help instructors use this book, we have included a COMPANION WEBSITE, with the following supplementary material located on www.routledge.com/cw/gateways:

- Gateway musical examples delivered on a Spotify playlist (and other sources) or on the book's website.
- Multiple-choice and short-answer quiz and exam questions.
- Suggestions for essay questions and in-class discussions.
- Gateways for traditions included in the first edition but omitted from the second edition.
- PowerPoint slides for each gateway with an outline of the main points, photos, and links to the gateway recording and related recordings.

For instructors in Music History courses, our colleagues Samuel N. Dorf, Heather MacLachlan, and Julia Randel have created an accompanying ANTHOLOGY OF SCORES, with composers' scores, ethnomusicologists' transcriptions, and other graphic and written representations of the "gateway" recordings. This anthology facilitates the integration of score study and music theory into the (ethno)musicology curriculum, a necessary focus in the training of professional musicians, and it provides one more opportunity to go beyond the textbook to examine our gateway musical examples in even greater depth. The anthology is available at www.routledge.com/9780367485382.

We trust that the rich set of materials, the exemplary pedagogy, and the goals and values we provide in this book and in its associated website and anthology of scores will serve the interests of instructors committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and of their students, who are in the process of discovering their place in the world.

Timothy Rice
Dave Wilson
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AUTHOR PROFILES

Timothy Rice has taught undergraduate courses based on the content and principles of this book since 1981. A Distinguished Professor, Emeritus, at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), he is the author of *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2014) and many books and articles on Bulgarian traditional music. He was founding co-editor of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, served as president of the Society for Ethnomusicology (2003–2005), and was founding director of The UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music (2007 to 2013). Since 2015 he has been the president of the Center for World Music in San Diego, California.

Dave Wilson is Senior Lecturer in Music at the New Zealand School of Music—Te Kōkī, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, where he has also served as Jazz Performance Program Director. A specialist in jazz and popular music, he has been consistently teaching courses based on the approaches of this book since 2014. His research integrates ethnography, performance, and composition and has been published in journals such as *Commoning Ethnography*, *Ethnomusicology*, *Leonardo Music Journal*, *Music & Politics*, and *Popular Music*. As a saxophonist and clarinetist, he frequently performs in jazz and other styles of improvisatory music, including on his collaborative albums *SLANT* (2019) and *In Passing* (2017).

INTRODUCTION

OUR GOAL IN WRITING THIS BOOK is to introduce readers to the vast range of human music making today. We believe that music is a fundamental aspect of our humanity. It is a form of human expression every bit as central to our social and personal well-being as language and speech. So rather than focusing on a particular type of music, like classical music or jazz or popular music or some of the world's many musical traditions, we believe there is much to be learned by thinking about all the ways human beings have chosen to make and listen to music no matter when or where they have lived or what kinds of music they love. From this broad selection of music we hope that our readers will learn how to:

- value all kinds of music for the ways they make us human;
- describe and analyze music through careful listening;
- interpret the psychological, social, and cultural meanings of music;
- ask and answer questions about any music; and
- understand the importance of music in human life.

Our approach to the study of music in this book is captured in the book's title, *Gateways to Understanding Music*. This introductory chapter explains the words in the title—music, understanding, and gateway. Grasping the distinctions, concepts, and questions that guide the organization of the text will help launch our exploration of some of the fascinating music people are making in the world today.

MUSIC

The book focuses on sixty recordings of music in three large and commonly used categories—classical music, jazz, and popular music—as well as the music of a number of communities that define themselves by their ethnicity, nationality, race, or religion. All the recordings are from the last 100 years. The earliest was released in 1927 and the most recent in 2021. They are not introduced in the order they were recorded or in the order the compositions were composed. The recordings are introduced in an order based on when some aspect of the musical tradition represented by the recording entered human musical experience.

The chronological narrative of the book is organized into three eras:

- Part I: the premodern era up to 1500 CE;
- Part II: the modern era from 1500 to 1890; and
- Part III: the age of recordings from 1890 to the present.

During the premodern era, no single country or empire dominated the world. Music developed in different ways in different places depending on geography, modes of economic production,

political control of land, and unique cultures and religions. The book divides this era into two periods:

1. the period from about 10,000 BCE to 3500 BCE, when human food production supported only small-scale societies; and
2. the Ancient and Medieval period from about 3500 BCE to 1500 CE, when kingdoms, empires, large cities, and the so-called Great Religions spread across many parts of the globe.

Representing small-scale societies are recordings of music by contemporary foragers (people who hunt for and gather their food) from Central Africa, nomadic pastoralists from Siberia, and horticulturalists from the Solomon Islands in the Western Pacific. One chapter in Part I is devoted to the music of three religions that emerged in the Ancient and Medieval periods: Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Another chapter is devoted to secular music with roots in the Ancient and Medieval periods: the court musics of China and the Middle East and rural traditions from Zimbabwe in Africa and Bulgaria in Europe.

Part II covers what historians call the modern era in world history, from 1500 to 1890. It is defined partly by European domination in global affairs through colonization and trade. As a consequence, the five chapters in Part II focus on European music, with excursions to other parts of the world where new traditions were being created simultaneously:

1. the European age of discovery (1500 to 1600);
2. the age of global commerce (1600 to 1750);
3. the age of Enlightenment and revolution (1750 to 1815);
4. the early nineteenth century (1815 to 1850); and
5. the late nineteenth century (1850 to 1890).

During the European age of discovery, Christian religious music developed new approaches to music composition at the same time that the roots of the court music traditions of India were being planted. During the age of global commerce, famous composers like Johann Sebastian Bach and Antonio Vivaldi were composing the first important works for string orchestra at the same time that wealthy sultans on the island of Java in present-day Indonesia were patronizing the formation of large orchestras of gongs and other metallic instruments. The age of Enlightenment and revolution witnessed the height of aristocratic patronage of such composers as Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven at the same time as enslaved Africans in the Americas were recreating their musical traditions under the harshest imaginable conditions. During the nineteenth century, as the power of the European aristocracy crumbled in the wake of the French Revolution, composers like Frédéric Chopin and Richard Wagner performed and composed for the newly wealthy beneficiaries of the Industrial Revolution, while people in the United States created music that responded to slavery, the Civil War, postwar Reconstruction, and end of Native American sovereignty and control of traditional lands.

Part III, covering the age of recordings, examines the era of mechanical, electrical, and digital reproduction of music. It began around 1890 with the sale of the first phonograph recordings. During this era, the United States replaced Europe as the center of global geopolitical power and cultural influence, and so in Part III American music becomes the focus of the narrative. Part III is divided into six chapters:

1. the turn of the twentieth century (1890 to 1918);
2. the interwar period (1918 to 1939);
3. World War II and its aftermath (1939 to 1950);
4. an age of disenchantment and protest (1950 to 1975);
5. music and community (1975 to 1994); and
6. music today (1994 to the present).

The invention of recording technology has preserved the history of music transmitted in both aural and written traditions for the past century and a quarter. Each chapter in Part III discusses recordings of European or American classical music, American popular music, jazz, and some kind of community-based music from the United States or abroad. European composers Igor Stravinsky and Dmitri Shostakovich, American composers Julius Eastman and Julia Wolfe, jazz pioneers Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, and popular music stars Jimi Hendrix, Public Enemy, and Olivia Rodrigo share the stage with innovators in mariachi, salsa, reggae, and K-pop.

UNDERSTANDING

People without musical training sometimes say, especially when they talk to musicians, “I don’t understand anything about music.” But in fact they understand a lot about music, especially the music they love. Nearly everyone has their favorite songs and pieces of instrumental music. They listen to them all the time, watch videos of them online, and, if they can, they go to live performances of their favorite musical artists. If they really didn’t understand music, they wouldn’t spend so much time listening to it, enjoying it, and being moved emotionally by it. **Understanding music** simply means that we find some of it orderly rather than chaotic, pleasant rather than unpleasant, predictable rather than unpredictable, meaningful rather than meaningless, and familiar rather than unfamiliar.

We gain these understandings of music through repeated listening over a lifetime. Each of us has a different collection of music we understand. What kinds of music do you understand? Rock or rap? Classical or jazz? EDM or K-pop? Chinese traditional music or Irish dance music? Soul or Tex-Mex music? Music for guitar or *sitar*? Your answers to these questions depend on your already having spent many years of your life listening to some of these kinds of music. During your lifetime of listening, the music you have listened to has become orderly, pleasant, predictable, meaningful, and familiar to you. Unless you have been living in a cave, isolated from the world of human-made sound, you already understand some significant part of the world’s music. One of our goals is to transform and expand your understanding of music. This book will help you to understand the music you already love even more deeply. It will also help you to understand music that hasn’t yet become part of your experience but that is just as important to other people as the music you understand and love is to you.

Our method for deepening and expanding your understanding of music involves explanation. **Explaining music** means to describe it, classify it, label it, and interpret its meanings. Explaining happens in words and also in diagrams and musical notation. Musical explanations provide the path along which you will move from your current understandings to new, deeper, and expanded understandings of music, including the music you already understand, the music that you may understand hardly at all, and the music you have never heard before. Probably the most satisfying result of explaining new and unfamiliar music will be that, through repeated hearings, you will come to understand it and find it orderly, pleasant, predictable, meaningful, and familiar.

While music will always remain a source of personal enjoyment, this book suggests that there are real intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical rewards in broadening the horizons of our listening experience and our current understanding of music. Reaping those rewards involves asking fundamental questions about the nature and meaning of music for all human beings, not just for ourselves. Why is music so important that virtually everyone in the world loves it in some form or other? What do differences in musical taste tell us about other individuals and about other groups of people? How does music function in our personal and social lives and in the lives of others? This book challenges the reader to understand the full range of music today, including the music you already know, love, listen to, and perform and the music that you don’t know much about or have never heard. Taking up the challenge by reading this book involves an aesthetic commitment to opening your mind to new musical possibilities and an ethical commitment to

hearing and caring about all the people who make this music in your locality, your region, your nation, and the world.

GATEWAYS

Our explanations of each of the sixty recordings featured in the book are contained in short sections called gateways. A **gateway** is a portal to a world of music. Such a world might be the music of a composer like Ludwig van Beethoven, a songwriter like Bob Marley, or a performer like Louis Armstrong; a genre or category of music such as Italian opera, salsa, or the blues; or the music of a nation or ethnic group such as Mexicans, Arab Americans, or the Shona people of Zimbabwe. **Genre** is a term for a category and type of music that is associated with a community of musicians and listeners. All the gateways ask the same five questions. Answering them in each gateway takes the reader on a path from initial understandings of the recording through explanations of it to new understandings of the recording and the world of music it opens up. The five questions are: What is it? How does it work? What does it mean? What is its history? and Where do I go from here?

In each gateway, the path from an initial understanding through explanation to a new understanding takes time. The journey begins by listening to the first thirty seconds or so of the recording to gain your first impression, your first understanding. Then you will read about how the music is put together, and we ask you to listen again for up to a minute to hear the features of the music that you have just read about. Then we ask you to listen a third time to the entire recording while following a timed listening guide with detailed explanations of important sections and moments in the recording. At the end of that third hearing of the recording, you will be familiar with the recording and have a new and significantly richer understanding of the recording and the world of music it represents than after your initial hearing. Don't miss this journey. You can't get this kind of understanding of music by reading about music. You can only get it by listening a few times to a recording and thinking a bit about it. You will get the most out of this book if you follow the path (the listening instructions) we give you in each gateway. We invite you to join us on the exciting journeys to new worlds of music that we have prepared for you.

Listening to music is the key that unlocks each gateway and begins the path to new understanding. Part of walking that path is engaging with musical explanation. That requires some new concepts and vocabulary. Here is an introduction of the basic concepts and terms necessary to answer the five questions in each gateway.

What Is It?

One of the first things humans do when they encounter something in the world is identify, label, or name it. What is it? What is this thing in front of me? Does it resemble anything I've encountered before? Do I have a category I can place it in? In the case of music, we typically name particular pieces and recordings, identify the composer and performers, and place the piece or performance within groups of pieces and performances: for example, Symphony No. 40 by W. A. Mozart; "Summertime" by George Gershwin; "Rokudan" for Japanese *koto*; "Formation," from *Lemonade* by Beyoncé; and a video recording of us singing "Happy Birthday" at my sister's party last Tuesday.

Answering the question "What is it?" sometimes requires identifying and labeling the category or genre or style to which it belongs. We use four categories or genres as one way to tell our story about all the world's music: American popular music; classical music; jazz; and the music of ethnic, national, racial, or religious groups.

Musical style is another way to label and categorize music. Musical **style** refers to the manner in which musical elements like melody and rhythm are deployed and combined in a large number of pieces or performances. We can speak, for example, of a composer's style, a performer's style, a national style, the style of a particular period in music history, or the style



FIGURE 0.1
The popular singer Madonna in 1987

Source: Olavtenbroek, Wikimedia Commons.

of a musical genre like R&B or disco. Analyzing musical elements helps us characterize the common features of many related pieces and performances.

Distinguishing among category, genre, and style can be tricky. For example, jazz is a named genre with its circle of players and fans, but a classical composer or an American popular songwriter or a Turkish performer might employ some elements of jazz style to create a certain effect in the genre they are working in. With that caution in mind, the terms “category,” “genre,” and “style” appear frequently throughout this book.

How Does It Work?

Asking how a recording of music works is the second step in explaining music and moving from old to new understandings of it. Music, like every field of study, has a vocabulary specific to it, and to explain how music works will require some specialized terms. We will introduce many of these terms as we go along, but for now, we’ll lay out some of the basics used to answer the question, “How does it [this recording of music] work?”

The most basic concept in music is the musical tone. Metaphorically, musical tones might



FIGURE 0.2
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Source: Jordan Fischer, Wikimedia Commons.



FIGURE 0.3
A jazz combo: Art Tatum (piano), Sid Catlett (drums), Oscar Pettiford (bass), and Billie Holiday (vocals)

Source: Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo.

be called the atoms of music. A tone is perceived when an event in the world causes air to vibrate, that vibration hits the eardrum, and those vibrations are processed by the brain as sound. Musical tones are those sounds that human beings make and interpret as music. A musical **tone** has five components: overtone structure, pitch, duration, envelope, and loudness.

Overtone Structure

Every tone consists of a **waveform**, a complex set of waves vibrating in air. The slowest vibrating wave in a tone, the one with the longest wave form, is called the **fundamental**. It is perceived as the pitch of the tone. The set of faster vibrating waves of the tone are called **over-tones**. They are typically not heard as pitches but unite in our perception as an impression of tone color or tone quality or timbre. Different timbres allow us to distinguish one musical instrument or voice from others: to tell the difference, for example, between a clarinet, a flute, and a trumpet.

Pitch

Our perception of the slowest vibrating wave in a tone, the one with the longest wavelength, is called the **pitch** of the tone. We call slow-vibrating waves low pitches and fast-vibrating waves high pitches.

Duration

Each musical tone also exists for a period of time, called its **duration**. Durations can be long or short.



FIGURE 0.4
Japanese court orchestra performing in Ukraine in 2010

Source: Antanana, Wikimedia Commons.

Envelope

Tones vary over their duration, forming the tone's **envelope**. Key moments in the envelope are its onset, called the **attack**, and its **decay** into silence. Plucked string instruments like the acoustic guitar have a sharp attack and a rapid decay. Bowed string instruments like the violin and wind instruments like the oboe can produce sustained tones over a long period of time.

Loudness

The **loudness** of a tone depends on the amplitude of the waveform. Musicians use Italian terms to describe loudness: soft is **piano**, and loud is **forte**. The difference between the loudest and softest tones in a piece of music is called its dynamic range, and changes in loudness are called **dynamics**.

One final comment: Some musicians, especially those who read musical notation, commonly refer to tones as notes. Technically, **notes** are visual representations of tones in musical notation. Musicians also refer to tones as pitches when the pitch of the tone is the topic of conversation. In this book we tend to use note and pitch rather than tone when describing music because that is what most musicians do.

Musicians combine musical tones in a nearly infinite variety of ways. To understand how they do this, to explain “how the music works,” requires the use of a somewhat specialized vocabulary. These terms break music down into its composite “elements.” Viewing music as made of “elements” derives from the many philosophical and religious traditions that believe that the world consists of fundamental and irreducible elements, essences, powers, or atomic particles that underlie everything in the universe. Such a view was expressed in the Ancient Greek classification of the world into four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Modern physics, with its theories of atoms made up of tiny subatomic particles, and modern chemistry, with its notion of chemical elements consisting of pure forms with one type of atom, are legacies of these traditions, as are explanations of music that claim it consists of musical elements.

In each gateway of this book we use seven elements to describe “how music works”: timbre, texture, rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and performance technique.

Timbre

The timbre or sound quality of a musical tone is a function of its overtone structure and its envelope. Studies of music perception and cognition show that one of the first things we recognize when we listen to music is its sound quality, which we often associate with the source of the sound. Is it a man or a woman singing? An adult or a child? What instrument is playing? Naming the musical instruments and vocal sounds in a musical example is one way to describe its timbre.

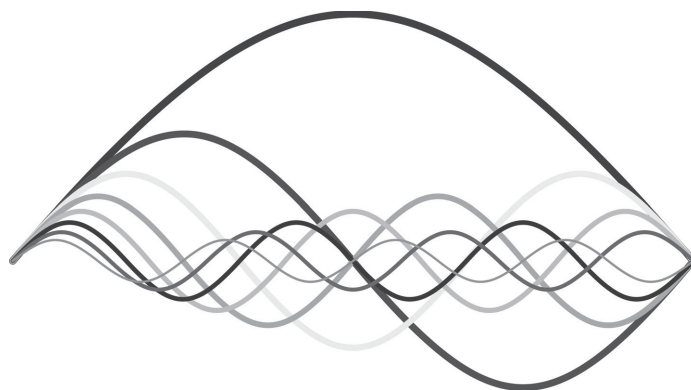


FIGURE 0.5
The fundamental and multiple overtones of a vibrating string producing a musical tone

Source: Alex Sawicka-Ritchie.

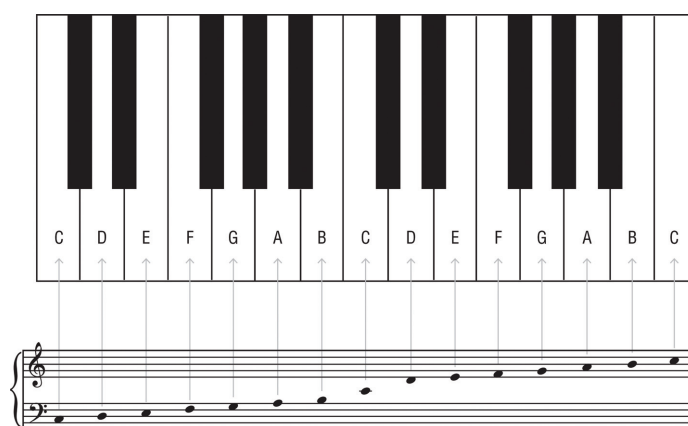



FIGURE 0.6
Pitches of tones indicated on the piano keyboard (with low pitches to the left and high pitches to the right) and in notation (with low pitches low on the musical staff and high pitches high on the musical staff)

Source: Alex Sawicka-Ritchie.

 Listen to example 1, “Someone Like You” by Adele. There are just two timbres in this recording. What are they?

Other than naming the instruments we hear, we have no systematic way of describing timbre, tone quality, or tone color. Instead, we use metaphors that link our listening experience of sound to other sensory experiences. So, for example, linking tone quality to taste, we might describe a sound as sweet or rich. Linking timbre to touch, we might say a sound is smooth or rough. Linking tone color to sight, we might call a sound bright or dull. Linking timbre to smell, we might call a sound fragrant or fresh. Sometimes we link the timbre of musical instruments to other aural experiences, saying, for example, that the sound is noisy or buzzing. We also sometimes link tone quality metaphorically to other experiences, calling the sound clean or dirty, pure or distorted, warm or cold. Beyond the naming of the source of the sound (the instrument creating it), descriptions of the element of timbre are notably subjective.

 Listen to example 2, Jimi Hendrix performing “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and example 3, Kenny Burrell playing “But Not for Me.” What adjectives would you use to describe and compare the tone quality of these two examples of electric guitar? (Hint: there is no correct answer!)

Texture

The word texture is a metaphor that connects the sound of music to the feel of woven cloth. Just as threads in a cloth interweave to create different sensory impressions when touched (smooth or rough) or looked at (shiny or dull), musical **texture** refers to the way the elements of a musical performance are woven together at one moment in time. There are two fundamental types of musical textures: those with a single musical line or threads and those with many interweaving musical lines or threads. A performance with a single musical line or part has a **monophonic texture**. A monophonic part may be performed **solo** (one performer sings or plays the part) or in **unison** (all the performers sing or play the same part). A texture with many lines or parts has a **polyphonic texture**. **Monophony** derives from Greek words meaning “one sound” and **polyphony** from Greek words meaning “many sounds.”


 Listen to the difference between the monophony of the solo male singer and the polyphony of a choir of male voices in example 4, a recording by the South African vocal group Ladysmith Black Mambazo called “Unomathemba.”



FIGURE 0.7

Adele performing with a pianist in 2016

Source: Getty Images/Christopher Polk.

Rhythm


Music is an art that unfolds in time, and the word **rhythm** refers to the temporal dimension of music in the broadest sense. Rhythm has two features: rhythm and meter. Rhythm in this more specific sense refers to the duration of tones and their organization. The rhythm of some performances might consist principally of long tones, another of short tones, and another of a combination of short and long tones. **Meter** refers to the organization of the pulsation or the beat of tones. There are two types of metrical organization in music: **nonmetrical** music lacks a beat or pulse; **metrical** music has a beat or pulse.

Most metrical music organizes its beats into groups of two or three or more pulses, with the first pulse receiving the most emphasis as the “strongest” beat. If the music is organized into groups of two beats, the music is said to be in **duple meter** or in two. If the beats are organized into groups of three, then the music is said to be in **triple meter** or in three. (In European musical notation, such groupings of beats or pulses are called **measures** or **bars**.) Figuring out the meter of a musical performance is one of the most important steps in explaining the music. Musical tones can be emphasized, or accented, “on the beat” or in between beats. When they are accented in between beats or on “weak” beats rather than on the regularly emphasized (strong) beats in a given meter, they are said to be **syncopated**. **Syncopation** may characterize individual parts in a performance, sections of a performance, an entire performance, or a style or genre of music.



FIGURE 0.8
Soloist with choir (Ladysmith Black Mambazo) in 2017

Source: Joe Mabel, Wikimedia Commons.

 Listen to example 5, “Let’s Go Crazy” by Prince. He begins by speaking nonmetrically over a sustained instrumental background until, around 0:38 seconds, the drums introduce a beat organized in a meter of four (or in four-beat measures).

Melody

Melody is the term used for the most important line in a musical texture. A melody consists of a series of pitches performed over time. We hear these pitches strung together in time as a coherent melody, **melodic part**, or **melodic line** in the musical texture. If we think in spatial terms of pitches moving through time in the horizontal direction and from low to high in the vertical dimension, then we can describe the shape of the melodic line, the **melodic shape**, as ascending, descending, undulating, and flat.

 Listen to example 6, the Duke Ellington Orchestra playing “The Mooche.” The opening melody at 0:08 has a descending shape.

Harmony

Harmony refers to the systematic combination of simultaneously sounding tones over the course of a section or piece of music. Usually harmonic systems produce pleasant, harmonious,



FIGURE 0.9
Five saxophones playing jazz in harmony

Source: René Clement, Wikimedia Commons.

consonant sounds, but not always. This musical term has been borrowed to describe people, objects, and ideas that go well together as being “in harmony.” On instruments like the piano and guitar, a musician can easily produce simultaneous pitches, that is, harmony. On instruments that produce one pitch at a time, like the voice, trumpet, and violin, musicians have to play together in ensembles to produce harmonies. Two or more simultaneously sounding pitches is called a **chord**.

Listen to example 7, a 2013 composition by Caroline Shaw titled *Partita for 8 Voices* (No. 4: “Passacaglia”). For the first minute and a half, the ensemble of male and female voices sings a progression of different chords, where all of the parts sing different lines simultaneously.

Form

Form refers to the “shape” of a musical performance as it unfolds through time from beginning to end. Form is an important aspect, in addition to rhythm, of the temporal dimension of music. Listening for the form of a piece or a performance means keeping track of how the elements of music change or stay the same from the start to the finish of the performance. Listening for the form of a performance means understanding whether what you are hearing now is a repeat of something you heard before, a variation of something you heard before, or something different from what you heard before. The “something” in this formulation is usually the melody or a melodic phrase, and descriptions of form are often descriptions of melodic form. In principle, however, a performance of music may have timbral form, textural form, rhythmic form, and harmonic form.

One way to notate and describe form involves the application of uppercase and lowercase letters to the “somethings,” let’s say melodies. So the letter A applies to the first melody in the performance, and it is applied to any repetition or return of A. The notation A’ (read “A prime”) is applied to a varied repetition of A. The letter B is applied to a new melody, and after that successive letters of the alphabet are given to yet new melodies. Here are a few possibilities:

- A A: a single melody is repeated exactly;
- A A’: a melody followed by a varied repeat of it;
- A B: a melody is followed by a second, different melody.

Forms can also be analyzed at two or more temporal levels. So, for example, the A melody may consist of, say, four melodic phrases indicated with lowercase letters, for example, A = a b a c.

Listen to example 8, a recording by Irish accordionist Sharon Shannon and her group of the song “Norwegian Wood” by John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles. How many different melodies do you hear in the course of the song? How many times is each of them repeated? Can you describe the form of the song at two different levels?

Performance Techniques

Performance techniques are a mixed bag of performance practices that musicians use. Musicians can manipulate the timbre of their voice or instrument. They may also change the

loudness of the tones (dynamics), sometimes abruptly and sometimes getting gradually louder (**crescendo**) or gradually softer (**decrescendo**). A melody may be performed with or without **ornamentation**, which are short tones between the main melody pitches. **Articulation** refers to the ways musicians connect the tones of the melody: smoothly (**legato**) or with spaces between them (**staccato**). Musicians can vary the **tempo**, that is, the speed of performance, from fast to slow.

 **Listen to example 9, Whitney Houston's recording of "I Will Always Love You," a song by Dolly Parton. Notice how Houston ornaments the melody and progresses from soft to loud over the course of the performance.**

What Does It Mean?

Music is a type of art and entertainment made up of musical tones and the seven musical elements outlined above. But music also is a human behavior with deep psychological, cultural, social, economic, and political significance. In this book we interpret the meaning of music in seven categories: (1) aesthetics; (2) emotional resonance; (3) cultural linkages; (4) social behaviors; (5) politics; (6) economic activity; and (7) use of technology.

Aesthetics

Part of the meaning of the music is revealed when we describe and explain the way composers and performers put the seven elements of music together and the way listeners hear them. These descriptions are at the root of understanding people's musical tastes. **Aesthetics** is the area of philosophy that deals with what is beautiful and appealing in the arts based on an analysis of the elements of the art. When, in a particular gateway, we speak of a composer's aesthetic or a cultural aesthetic, our understanding of that aesthetic depends on our descriptions of music in the "how does it work" section.

AESTHETICS

Emotional Resonance

Humans also sing and play music to express and communicate emotions in a controlled way. Many listeners enjoy music for the emotional response it can generate in them. Music functions in this way because it is, like language, a system of signs that signal our thoughts to others. A **sign** or **signal** is an object or an action that has meaning to a person or a group of people. Musical performances are signs with meaning, just as stop signs, national flags, a smile, or a tattoo are. Every aspect of our life in society, our social life, is suffused with signals and signs. Without them we could not live together in social groups. Music is a particularly effective sign system for conveying and generating emotion.

Music conveys its meanings and emotions in a different way from language and speech. **Language signs** convey their meanings in precise, detailed, and clearly understood ways that everyone who speaks a particular language can understand. All speakers of English agree on the meaning of the word "tree," for example. Language signs are useful because they allow us to communicate our thoughts and feelings rather exactly to those around us who speak the same language.

Music does not communicate or act as a sign or convey meaning in the same way that language does. The meaning of music is not conveyed by language signs but by two other types of signs: indexes and icons.



FIGURE 0.10
Singer Janis Joplin (1943–1970)

Source: Keystone Pictures USA/Alamy Stock Photo.



FIGURE 0.11
Fans and football players with different responses to the indexical meaning of the U.S. national anthem

Source: Keith Allison, Wikimedia Commons.

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

strong feelings we experience when we listen to music. Indexical musical signs generate strong emotions without our thinking about them in words. Because not all of us share the same associations between a musical sign and its references, a given piece or performance of music may generate rather different emotions in different listeners. A musical index is thus a very different type of sign from a language sign, in which agreement as to its meaning is basic to the communicative function of language. Throughout this book we use certain phrases as synonyms for stating that something is an indexical sign of something else. We might say that it “is an index of,” “indexes,” “points to,” “is associated with,” or “is linked to” something else. All these phrases are driving at the same idea: one way music has meaning and generates emotion is through its association with previous experience, whether outside music or within the music itself.

The other type of musical sign conveys meaning through similarity. These musical signs are called **iconic signs** or **icons** by analogy with religious icons, paintings in a church that portray in two dimensions the features of a three-dimensional person, typically a saint. In symphonic music, for example, a fast, low-pitched drum roll and a cymbal crash can be icons of thunder and lightning, which the composer may hope will generate a corresponding feeling of dread in the listener. In heavy metal rock music, loud, distorted guitar chords called power chords may generate a feeling of social power among fans of this music, many of them teenagers who might feel otherwise powerless. Musical performances can also be iconic of social relationships, both real and imagined. When, in the 1930s, the white jazz bandleader Benny Goodman included Black musicians in his small combos, the ensembles became icons of an imagined racial equality and integration in a segregated society. They may have generated a feeling of hope in some audience members.

Like indexical signs, iconic musical signs are sometimes shared by a culture or subculture and sometimes are individual in their meaning. Certain phrases in this book are synonyms for saying something is an iconic sign of something else. We might say that it “is an icon of,”

An **index** or **indexical sign** is named for the index finger that points to things. The national anthem is a tune that points to and thus is associated with patriotic events, lyrics, and feelings. Whenever the tune is played, even at a sporting event with no patriotic significance, it points to or indexes pride in one’s nation. However, not everyone may understand this musical sign the same way. Those disaffected and alienated by the gap between a nation’s ideals and its realities may have more complex feelings.

While a national anthem is a shared sign for the people of a nation, some musical indexes are very personal and even unique to a single person or a few people. One example is the “our song” phenomenon. Two people in love may decide that a particular song they heard on their first date is “our song.” From then on that song will be associated with the lovers’ relationship. While they are together, they may like the song, but if they break up, they may come to hate the song because of its negative associations with a failed relationship.

Musical indexes are very powerful signs and are the bearers of many of the

“is a metaphor for,” “is similar to,” “resembles,” “imitates,” “is coherent with,” or “paints” something else. All these phrases are driving at the same idea: one way music has meaning and generates emotion is through its similarity to previous musical, cultural, and social experience.

Cultural Linkages

Music is also a cultural expression. As such, its elements are nearly always coherent with (icons of) other modes of cultural expression such as cosmology, religion, poetry, painting, sculpture, and theater. Commonly, musical elements amplify the meanings of these other expressive forms. A high-pitched descending melodic phrase can add emotional power to a sad song lyric. Musical performances tell us stories about ourselves and others in ways different from language. They are metaphorical texts that we can read to understand our fellow human beings, whether they are sitting next to us in the classroom, come from another part of the country or the world, belong to a different ethnic or social group, or live in a faraway city we someday hope to visit or a rainforest that we may never visit.

CULTURAL LINKAGES

Social Behavior

Music is also a social behavior. As such, it participates in the production of social difference along lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Of these issues gender and sexual relations are fundamental. Love songs are part of musical experience nearly everywhere in the world. And music enables dancing, the archetypal arena for displaying gendered selfhood and sexual attraction. But just as important, gender in many societies limits who makes what kinds of music. Men and women may each have their own specialized repertoires and styles. Men may be accorded more freedom to move about in the public square and thus to perform music there, while women may be encouraged to make music only in domestic circles. In some communities gender non-binary individuals may find little space for their music making, while in others they may be highly valued and centrally important performers.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Male musicians throughout the history of classical music, jazz, and many popular music and other genres have had profound social advantages over women, and so gateways on J. S. Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Bob Marley, Jimi Hendrix, and others are unavoidable when telling the stories of those traditions. But we intervene in various ways to illuminate this mostly male history of music by focusing on women performers and composers whenever we can. Today we understand that composing, singing, arranging, playing instruments, producing recordings, and much more are legitimate pursuits for people of any gender.

Politics

Politics, from the Greek for city, concerns the exercise of power in governance and decision-making, particularly in the public sphere. Because of music’s emotional resonance, its indexical links to other aspects of culture, and its iconic enactments of social behavior, authoritarian governments have often thought it necessary to control music making in support of its control of society. Those without



FIGURE 0.12
Siebenbürgen, a goth metal band from Sweden, in 2008

Source: Levidark, Wikimedia Commons.



FIGURE 0.13
Brittney Howard singing
and playing guitar with
her blues rock band
Alabama Shakes in 2012

Source: Fred Rockwood,
Wikimedia Commons.



FIGURE 0.14
Drummers march with
Indigenous activists in
Seattle, Washington,
in solidarity with the
Standing Rock Sioux in
their fight against the
Dakota Access Pipeline,
2016

Source: John Duffy, Wikimedia
Commons.

POLITICS

power have often used music to support nascent feelings of national sentiment, rage against the powers that be, champion a political movement, or amplify the sound of mass demonstrations. Music's significance as an aid to the exercise of power and political action will appear in quite a few gateways.

Economic Activity

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

In some cultures music is a pastime and something that nearly everyone does for the fun of it and to contribute to successful social interactions. But in stratified societies with divisions of labor, musicians may be specialists or professionals who are paid for their labor. Patronage, that is, the question of who provides musicians with the means to support themselves, is an important factor in the creation of music. The significance of music as an economic activity suffuses many of the gateways in this book.

Technology

We tend to think of technology as the latest electronic gadgets in our world (smartphones, computers, medical devices), the software that runs on them (apps, programs), and the computer networks they use (the internet, Wi-Fi). But in a broader sense technology refers to the tools humans have always used for tasks in their lives: hunting, farming, cooking, building, healing, communicating, thinking, and making music. Nearly every gateway contains a discussion of the musical instruments and the electronic technology that musicians have invented or used to make the music they want to make.

TECHNOLOGY

What Is Its History?

Each gateway recording is also explained by its history. That history includes the origins of the genre or style it represents, the social and cultural conditions that produced the particular gateway recording, and the history of that music since the recording was first created. No matter the place or historical time period that originally produced it, this section also discusses the way this type of music resonates in our culture and our listening experience today. In other words, although our narrative is broadly historical, we are not consigning any of the musical worlds we introduce to the past. Each one is alive in the present and has its own history.

Where Do I Go from Here?

The book answers this question by providing a few suggestions for listening to audio recordings, watching videos, or doing some additional reading to expand your understanding of the world of music opened up by the gateway example.

Learning to ask and answering the five questions asked about each gateway recording in this book should enable you to apply this explanatory apparatus to all the music you encounter in the future. You should be able to understand and explain what any music you hear means to you and to those who make it and love it no matter where in the world they live. Let's get started.



FIGURE 0.15

Country singer Dierks Bentley performs at the White House in 2011

Source: The White House, Wikimedia Commons.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Think of a recording of music that you react to emotionally and, using the concepts of index and icon, explain why you think it has that effect on you.
- Explain why you like a particular song or genre of music either in terms of the way it expresses your social identity (class, race, ethnicity, gender) or in terms of the way it reflects your political values or the cultural worlds you live in, or both.

NEW TERMS

articulation
attack
bar

chord
crescendo
decay

decrescendo
duple meter
dynamics

envelope	melody, melodic line, or	rhythm
explaining music	melodic part	sign/signal
form	meter	solo
forte	metrical	staccato
fundamental	monophony/monophonic	style
gateway	texture	syncopated/syncopation
genre	nonmetrical	tempo
harmony	note	texture
icon/iconic sign	ornamentation	timbre
index/indexical sign	overtones	tone, musical
language sign	piano	triple meter
legato	pitch (low, high)	understanding music
loudness	polyphony/polyphonic	waveform
measure/bar	texture	world of music

Music History to 1500 CE

UNTIL ABOUT 1500 CE no single cultural, economic, or political center dominated world affairs. Political power was either local or limited to particular areas of the world such as China, India, and Mesopotamia. Part I examines some of the musical traditions in the world today with roots in this period of history before 1500. Chapter 1 looks at music of the oldest social formations still in existence today. These are small-scale societies that sustain themselves by foraging (hunting and gathering plants), caring for domesticated herd animals (nomadic pastoralists), and planting small gardens (horticulturalists).

Chapters 2 and 3 examine music with roots in the Ancient and Medieval periods of human history. The Ancient period begins around 3000 BCE with the invention of writing and the advent of large-scale agriculture based on growing wheat, rice, and other grains. The ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Greek, and Roman Empires appear during this period, as well as four major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity).

European histories name the time after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE the Medieval period. Formed from the roots “medi” meaning between and “eval” meaning time, it was the time, the “Middle Ages,” between the Ancient period and the beginning of European dominance in world affairs, which historians call the modern period. Islam and many secular musical traditions today have their roots in this Medieval period between 476 and 1500. Chapters 2 and 3 cover both the Ancient and Medieval periods: Chapter 2 on Ancient and Medieval religious music and Chapter 3 on Ancient and Medieval secular music.



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MUSIC OF SMALL-SCALE SOCIETIES



EVERYONE IN THE WORLD today lives in a complex web of national, regional, and local governments, economies, and media information. About half live in cities and half in rural areas. In the United States about 80 percent live in cities. In rural areas around the world there are a very few small-scale societies that continue to sustain themselves with the oldest still-extant modes of human food production on the planet: foraging, nomadic pastoralism, and horticulture. The gateways in this chapter provide a portal to the musical worlds of these types of societies.

Foraging societies hunt wild game and gather plants, nuts, and seeds to sustain themselves. Human forager societies date to the late Paleolithic Period (Old Stone Age), which began around 2.5 million years ago. Around 10,000 BCE, humans began a transition from food gathering to food producing. At that time humans learned how to domesticate plants and animals, a set of practices known collectively as agriculture. Horticulture refers to the domestication of plants for food, but in small quantities that support only small groups of people. This “Agricultural Revolution” or “Neolithic Revolution” first took place in four regions of the world: grain farming in the Fertile Crescent, the area along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in present-day Iraq and along the Nile River in Egypt; rice growing in the Yangtze and Yellow River basins of China; maize growing in Central America; and root crops in Papua New Guinea. From these regions it took until about 2000 BCE for agriculture to spread to most regions of the world.

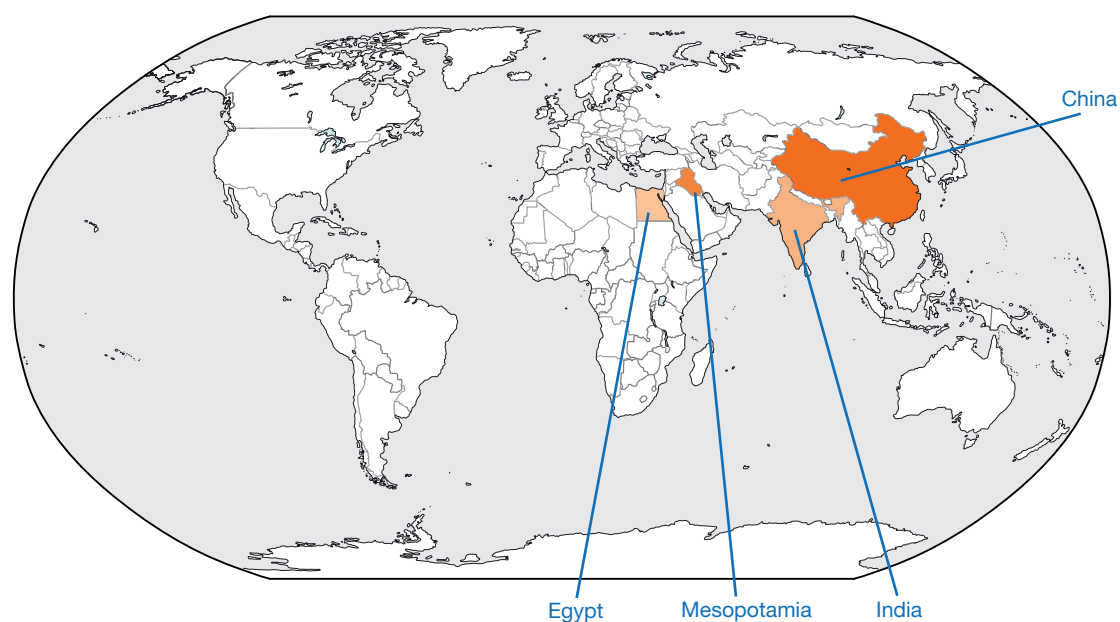


FIGURE 1.1
Map of Ancient
civilizations

The music of these still-extant social formations is mainly known today through recordings made by ethnomusicologists who have lived in these isolated places for a year or more to study their music. In a few cases musicians from these cultures have toured around the world and played with musicians from the classical and jazz scenes. Sometimes these musicians, seeking new sources of inspiration, have used or referenced ethnomusicologists' recordings in their own creations. This chapter contains three gateways, one example from each of these three types of societies: Central African foragers; nomadic pastoralists from Inner Asia (Siberia); and horticulturalists from the Solomon Islands in the Western Pacific. In all these cases the music making of these foragers, nomadic pastoralists, and horticulturalists is intimately linked to the natural environment in which they live. Their music contributes in important ways to the social organization, psychological well-being, and work patterns of these societies.

Because the histories of these musical traditions were not written down before their contact with explorers, missionaries, ethnomusicologists, and tourists, we do not claim that the actual music in these recordings is thousands of years old. But we place them first in our chronology because the social formations that these musical practices contribute to and draw from are the oldest on earth today. And some of the general elements of the musical cultures we observe today may, indeed, be very old:

- the understanding of the resonant potential of found and made objects for making music, for example, from a hollow log, a piece of bamboo, a cooking pot, or a hunting bow;
- the prominent use of the human voice to create social harmony and communicate across social barriers;
- the iconic and therefore expressive, emotional link between singing and crying;
- the intimate relationship between the sound of music and the sound of the environment; and
- the belief that singing can be more effective than speech for contacting the supernatural world of ancestors, spirits, and gods.

These very old understandings of the nature of music form the bedrock of all human musical cultures today.

GATEWAY 1 **MUSIC OF FORAGERS**

What Is It?

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Our gateway to the music of extant forager societies is a recording of the BaAka people of the Central African Republic singing “Bisengo Bwa Bolé” in a dance form called *mabo*. It was recorded in the 1980s by ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk. The BaAka live in small bands of fifty to a hundred people in a huge rainforest along the Congo River basin, the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon River basin, near the borders of four countries: Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo, and Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Mabo*, a hunting dance that was current during Kisliuk's visits there in the 1980s and 1990s, is sung before, during, and after hunts in which the community spreads nets in a circle around an area of the forest and then chases and ensnares animals, mostly antelopes of various sizes, into them. This song accompanies dancing led by men but including women.

 **Listen to the first thirty seconds of the recording.**

How Does It Work?

Timbre

This performance includes men's and women's singing with yodeling, along with low- and high-pitched drum sounds and a stick beating time.



FIGURE 1.2
Map of Africa
(BaAka people)

Home of the BaAka people

Texture

The texture is polyphonic, consisting of many people singing different rhythmically independent melodic lines.

Rhythm

The drums play a pattern of four strong beats, each subdivided into three pulses by a pattern of low- and high-pitched sounds (L-H-H-L-H-H) to create a meter of six beats. Notice that the pulses are not absolutely even but have a slightly lilting character. The melodic lines interlock with the drum rhythms but in a way difficult to hear.

Melody

A prominent feature of some BaAka songs is yodeling. **Yodeling** is an alternation between chest-resonated tones and high-pitched, head-resonated tones, which produces melodies with disjunct or leapwise melodic motion.

Harmony

The harmony is the result of the simultaneous singing of many melodic lines.

Form

The basic form consists of fixed melodies, some of which are repeated and treated to improvised melodic variations. As a new song gets older and becomes familiar, singers stop singing



FIGURE 1.3
BaAka women dancing *mabo*

Source: Michelle Kisliuk.

the main theme. With the main themes silent but in their ears, they sing variations on them. The singers listen carefully to each other and echo, repeat, and vary what they sing in response to what they hear. Careful listening is a skill necessary for survival in the forest and interpersonal and social well-being. The loudest melodic line in the texture is not the melody but the voice of the person, named Mokpake, who was sitting closest to the ethnomusicologist's microphone. The text is a single line of text plus a variety of **vocables**, nonlexical syllables like "i yay i oh."

Performance Techniques

The most striking performance techniques are the yodeling by some of the singers and melodic variations in their singing.

 **Listen to this recording with these elements in mind and while following this timed listening guide.**



LISTENING GUIDE 1.1

TIME	DESCRIPTION
0:00	The recording fades in.
0:04	A woman close to the mic starts a yodeling melody; other melodies are heard in the background.
0:30	The yodeling line is no longer heard, but a melody line without yodeling is prominent.
1:12	A yodeling melody returns.
1:45	The yodeling line again disappears.
1:58	The yodeling line returns.
2:18	And so on to the end.
5:27	End

What Does It Mean?

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The equality of voices in a performance of *mabo* during a BaAka music-and-dance event mirrors the social organization of BaAka society and the physical activity of the hunt. BaAka and other forager societies are often described as egalitarian, meaning that they value and maintain a social order that makes few if any of the distinctions that most large-scale societies have between leaders and followers, high and low classes, and occupational categories. They own very few things except hunting nets, spears, machetes, cooking pots, and some clothing, and these are routinely shared, traded, and even swiped when the swiper claims it is common property. When they want drums for a *mabo* dance, they quickly make a temporary drum from a rotting log and an animal skin or, if circumstances allow, they borrow more substantial drums from village horticulturalists who live on the edges of the forest and where the BaAka live during some parts of the year.

Every able-bodied man and woman participates in food-gathering activities, although men usually take the lead in net hunting while women gather roots and seeds on the way to help with the hunt. To ensure the success of the hunt, men start and lead the *mabo* dancers just as they start and lead the hunt, but women soon join in both activities, helping with the hunt and singing

and dancing enthusiastically for the success of the hunt. Women also have dances that they control entirely, some of which mock men as a way of restoring the balance of power.

Although BaAka society is closer to an egalitarian ideal than most societies in the world, they single out four important social categories: (1) eldest sibling, (2) lead hunter, (3) healer, and (4) expert teacher of songs and dances. The lead hunter and healer are usually men, an indication of some inequality between men and women. Both men and women may be the eldest sibling and act as expert teachers of songs and dances. Children learn the songs and dances by watching adults, but adults sometimes invite master teachers from other camps to teach them new songs and dances. Some of these songs and dances are attributed to particular individuals, who have some heightened status on that account.

Circular forms permeate their lifeways. The nets are spread in a semicircle in the forest just as, in their forest camps, people's small, one-room, dome-shaped houses, made by women out of forest materials, are arranged in a circle. *Mabo* dancers dance counterclockwise in a circle within a circle of spectators within the circle of houses constructed in circular form. The iconicity of these circular architectural, social, and dance structures creates a feeling of familiarity, comfort, and coherence for the BaAka.

Although they are taught new songs and learn old songs by watching, they are not taught fixed parts to sing in the polyphonic texture. Instead, they develop the ability to create numerous variations, which they are free to sing at will, on the melody of each *mabo* song. Sometimes, as in the recording, they drop out for a while, only to enter again when they feel like it. Consistent with their egalitarian social structure, no one leads the performance and tells others what to do. If they try, they are usually ignored. All the lines in the polyphony are equally important. Their ability to create polyphony spontaneously stands in striking contrast to spontaneous group singing in American culture, where singing, say at a birthday party, is typically monophonic. The inability to sing polyphonically in relatively egalitarian social settings is consistent with American society's stratified social structure, which includes a specialized category of trained musicians who have the ability to sing and play polyphonically, but often only under the direction of a leader who organizes them. The specialization of labor characteristic of many modern societies results in a distinction between the few people who perform polyphonic music very well and most people, who perform monophonically and not always very well.

For the dancers, the drumming provides the rhythm for their dance movements. They hold their bent arms close to their bodies, while their feet move in a step-touch-step-touch pattern on the main low-pitched drum beats as they move around the circle. Their hips articulate the subdivisions of the beat, which they may hear in groups of two or in groups of three. Hearing these groups of two is aided by the way the players of the small drum play the triple-sounding L-H-H pattern. They do not use their hands to mirror the sound pattern, however. Instead, they play the sound pattern by alternating their two hands like this:

Pitches	L-H-H-L-H-H
Hands	R-L-R-L-R-L

This difference between the sound and the motion that produces them creates a **poly-meter**, the simultaneous presence of two meters, in this case duple meter in the hand motion against triple meter in the sound that results from the hand motion. The dancers hear the two meters and, bent at the waist, move their feet, knees, and buttocks in response to what they experience as a rich polymetric texture. These two parts yield what seems to be a single monophonic drum part, but the polymeter of the duple hand movements against the triple pattern of the drum sounds creates an **inherent polyphony**, an experience of polyphony that results from a monophonic line or part played by the drummers.

Polyphonic singing also sounds literally natural to the BaAka, not least because it is iconic of the polyphony of forest sounds (birds singing and calling, leaves rustling, cicadas buzzing, insects chirping) that they hear all around them. Unison singing probably would sound rather unnatural to them and not in harmony with nature. When they are alone, walking or gathering food in the forest, they sing monophonically the solo yodeling melodic lines that make up the

AESTHETICS

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texture of *mabo* singing. Each person's particular way of singing these lines is their personal signature and an index of their presence in the forest. During the hunt they use their personal yodeling melodies to signal their position to the other hunters, creating a rich polyphonic texture of yodels and calls that help with the hunting. Melodic yodeling lines, as signatures or indexes of particular individuals, may touch those who hear them as they recognize friends. The texts also may be touching, as they express incidents in ordinary life, memories of people who have died, and accusations of bad behavior.

CULTURAL LINKAGES

The genre *mabo* and solo singing in the forest are but two of a number of BaAka genres. Others include music for spear hunting, women's dances, solo lullabies, and songs included in stories that tell of the BaAka's relationship to the animals and the natural and supernatural worlds. They believe, for example, in a benevolent forest god that brings them good fortune. Both men and women sing net-hunting and spear-hunting songs, and the women have their own dance-and-song forms that serve their emotional and social needs and exclude men.

What Is Its History?

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Foraging, which refers to both the hunting of game and the gathering of edible plants, and forager societies arose toward the end of a long era called the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age). It began about 2.5 million years ago when protohuman hominids began using stone tools, and it ended around 10,000 BCE, when humans invented agriculture. Forager societies typically operate in small bands, some perhaps no larger than the nuclear family. Such bands need to be just the right size, not too small or too large, to hunt and gather food efficiently enough to feed the group.

Today, only a few forager societies, like the BaAka, still exist. They can be found among some American Indian groups, especially in California and the Great Basin between the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada; the Arctic people known as Inuits; Aboriginal Australians; the San people of the Kalahari Desert in Namibia (southern Africa); the Amazon basin; and societies of forest dwellers in Central Africa like the BaAka. The small stature of these Central African foragers led writers in the past to refer to them collectively as Pygmies. Because this label comes from outside the culture and has developed pejorative connotations, scholars today prefer to call them by the names they give themselves: BaAka, BaBenzele, BaMbuti, and so forth.

TECHNOLOGY

In nearly all cases the music of forager societies is primarily vocal. They rarely have dedicated or permanently constructed musical instruments. Rather, they transform hunting and cooking tools or objects found in the environment into musical instruments. They do not mind discarding these found instruments and rebuilding them when they need them.

It is possible to imagine, but not prove, that some of the principles behind their music making today are among the oldest on earth. Probably the specific melodies and musical elements heard today in their music are not the same as they were thousands of years ago. And yet some elements of their music may be thousands of years old, including the emphasis on vocal rather than instrumental music and their performance of both solo and polyphonic singing. Other Central African foragers use flutes made from small sections of bamboo and trumpets made from hollow logs, and it is probable that they discovered long ago the music-making capacity of these objects from their environment. Foragers, including the BaAka, turn hunting bows into musical instruments by placing the string in their mouths and resonating overtones of the vibrating bow string, which they pluck. Making a link between present-day and millennia-old musical elements depends on the hypothesis that musical elements are always embedded in social, cultural, political, and economic structures, some of which, like hunting and gathering, have been with us for millennia. So perhaps some elements of foragers' music making today have their roots in millennia-old ways of making music.

EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

The BaAka and other contemporary foragers do not live in the past, however. They live in the modern present and are connected to nearby local groups and Christian missionaries from far away. Possibly for as long as there have been village agriculturalists living near them, foragers may have been exchanging musical styles and musical instruments with them, as the BaAka now borrow drums from nearby agriculturalists for their *mabo* dance. The BaAka live part of the year in isolation in the forest and part of the year in or near a village of nearby cultivators,