



Global Music History and Northern Europe in the 18th and 19th Centuries
University of Copenhagen, 15–16 May 2026

Building on previous networks of trade and imperial expansion, the 18th and 19th centuries saw Northern Europe emerge as a power of industrialisation, colonisation, trade, and cultural exchange. Some areas (e.g. those connected to the British Empire) have already seen significant recent scholarship in global music history, while other areas of Northern Europe (e.g. Scandinavia) are ripe for a more systematic inclusion of approaches from global music historiography. With this conference we seek to bring together scholars who are interested in creating critical narratives of Northern Europe and its global musical pasts (including music's intersections with other artforms).

Note: We define “Northern Europe” in the broadest sense, from the Low Countries and Northern Germany in the south to the Arctic in the north and from the Baltic region in the east to the British Isles in the west. We welcome papers on any topic related to this geographic area and its global reach, i.e. colonies, trade networks, diplomatic relations, diasporas etc.

Programme committee:

Mikkel Vad, Jens Hesselager, and Peter Koch Gehlshøj, the University of Copenhagen.

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UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURAL STUDIES
HUM:GLOBAL



Conference programme

Venue: University of Copenhagen, South Campus, room 16.4.11

Friday, May 15

10:00–11:00: Registration

10:45–11:00: Welcome

11:00–12:30: Musical colonizers

Phil Dodds, “The Appropriate Scale of Music: Swedish and Scottish Musical Conization in Southern Africa, 1770–1850”

Kanav Gupta, “Reconstructing the musical lives of British residents in colonial India in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries”

Jens Hesselager, “18th and early 19th century musical visitors to the West Indies – real and imaginary. In search of Speneux, Fontalbe and Belinde. And Magdalena.”

12:30–13:30: Lunch

13:30–15:00: Travelling musicians

Pete Yelding, “Restoring innovative agency to perpetually othered musicians: the case of the Lucknow-Shahjahanpur Gharana in late nineteenth-century Northern Europe”

Eva Hvidt, “Asger Hamerik’s Time in Baltimore”

Holly Lawson, ““Ich bin Hamlet der Däne”: Shakespeare on the move in the career of Felicitas Vestvali 1867–70”

15:00–15:30: Coffee break

15:30–17:00: Keynote lecture

Katherine Schofield: “Archives differing: collaborative music history, stereophonic methods, and the paracolonial Indian Ocean”

17:00: Reception

Saturday, May 16

9:00–10:00: Cultural encounters

Matthew Madeley, “A Synthesis of East and West? John Foulds, Maud MacCarthy, Theosophy and the combination of European and Indian Music”

Erik Steinskog, “Missionaries and Modernism: Fartein Valen between Madagascar and West-Norway.”

10:00–10:30: Coffee break

10:30–12:00: Local, national, and international histories

Halvor K Hosar “Paradoxical Internationalism: Johann Abraham Peter Schulz’s Symphonies in Trondheim”

Axel Klein “On the challenges of writing a musical history of Ireland”

Eric Coutts, “Commerce, Slavery, and London Concert Life in the Eighteenth Century”

12:00–13:00: Lunch

13:00–14:00: Ethnographic imaginations

Thomas Overdijk, “Popular Entertainment and Biological Essentialism in the Colonial Netherlands”

Patrick Burke, “Musical Instrument Collections in Norway's Ethnographic Museums, 1856-1910”

15:00-17:00: Visit to the museum Davids Samling/The David Collection.

Abstracts

Keynote: Katherine Schofield, “Archives differing: collaborative music history, stereophonic methods, and the paracolonial Indian Ocean”

One of the biggest methodological challenges in researching and writing the auditory, sonic, and performance histories of the paracolonial world before the era of recorded sound is developing an ear for where sound and performance might linger within and between radically differing archives. This challenge is compounded when we are seeking to connect archives that are multilingual, embodying multiple lineages of knowledge, and interregional, in this case dealing with the diverse cultural geographies of the eastern Indian Ocean c.1760–1860. The texture of the official colonial records of, say, the India Office in London is utterly distinct from those of the hundreds of rich treatises on Hindustani music from this era in India’s classical and vernacular languages, which themselves embody diverse genealogies of musical thought. But in the Malay world for the same period, under the same colonial rulers, there were no written works dedicated to music at all; instead, one must search the entire gamut of Malay and other regional literatures for sonic references, and think laterally about how to trace audibility and performativity in language itself.

How can we use these differing colonial and paracolonial archives, and the idiosyncratic methods and knowledge required to understand each one, to write cohesive, connected histories of music and sound in the eastern Indian Ocean region—especially when the ephemeral object of our attention has long passed into silence? In this paper I will document the challenges and advantages of bringing variegated archives together—from both sides of the Bay of Bengal, and from colonial records and private papers to the manuscript and print cultures of the colonised—to produce a stereophonic sounding of Indian Ocean musical worlds in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In so doing I aim to present one solution to the question of how we write histories of music and sound under colonialism that prioritise regional voices in their multiplicity and independent agency.

Katherine Schofield is the multiple-award-winning author of *Music and Musicians in Late Mughal India: Histories of the Ephemeral, 1748–1858* (Cambridge, 2024). She is Head of the Department of Music at King’s College London, where she is Professor of South Asian Music and History specialising in early modern India and the paracolonial Indian Ocean. Katherine has been Principal Investigator of a European Research Council Starting Grant (2011–16) and a British Academy Mid Career Fellow (2018), and is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and the Royal Historical Society. Working largely with Persian, Urdu, and visual sources for elite musical culture in North India and the Deccan c.1570–1860, Katherine’s research interests lie in South Asian music, visual art, and cinema; the history of Mughal India (1526–1858); Islam and Sufism; empire and the paracolonial; and the intersecting histories of the emotions, the senses, aesthetics, ethics, and the supernatural. She is the editor with Francesca Orsini of *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature, and Performance in North India* (Open Book, 2015), and with Imke Rajamani and Margrit Pernau *Monsoon Feelings: A History of Emotions in the Rain* (Niyogi, 2018). Her new edited volume, with Margaret E Walker, will be *Hindustani Music Between Empires: Relational Histories, 1750–1900* (Primus, 2026 forthcoming).

Patrick Burke, “Musical Instrument Collections in Norway's Ethnographic Museums, 1856-1910”

Although Norway (during its union with Denmark and then Sweden) was not a major colonial power in its own right during the 19th century, Norwegian entrepreneurs, missionaries, anthropologists, journalists, and sailors aided larger imperialist nations in their colonizing mission. Musical encounters reported by Norwegian travelers both shaped a nascent European understanding of “non-Western” music and helped justify Norway’s complicity in colonialism. In Norway itself, museum displays were central sources of information about musical instruments from the Global South and gave generations of Norwegians enticing, if often misleading, glimpses into unfamiliar forms of cultural expression. This paper presents preliminary research conducted in three ethnographic collections in Norway: Kulturhistorisk Museum (University of Oslo); Historisk Museum (University of Bergen); and Misjons- og diakoniarkivet (VID vitenskapelige høyskole, Stavanger), which holds the collections of Det Norske Misjonsselskap and its now-defunct museum. Each institution began collecting and cataloging musical instruments along with other ethnographic materials during the 1850s and 1860s. Records at each archive shed light on a network of donors including government officials, ship captains, Lutheran clergy, and professional dealers in ethnographica, each playing specific but related roles in the global colonial system. Using collections of Congolese instruments as case studies, this paper will demonstrate in what contexts instruments were displayed (and sometimes played) at Norwegian museums and how such representations, while they created possibilities for intercultural understanding, served primarily to uphold imperialist ideology and Norway’s place in sustaining it.

Eric Coutts, “Commerce, Slavery, and London Concert Life in the Eighteenth Century”

The commercialisation of leisure in England in the second half of the eighteenth century encouraged the development of the concert as a tradable commodity and opened new economic possibilities for music sellers and publishers, impresarios, musicians, and eventually composers. The century saw the arrival of increasing numbers of foreign composers to London, drawn by the prospect of independence from church and court employment and the opportunity to accumulate significantly greater wealth than at home. Indeed, wealth became a core criterion of taste: money and status were essential to gain recognition as a member of the cultured class. I argue that study of the reception-aesthetics of West End concert performance and audiences offers important perspectives on the impact of wealth and class on later eighteenth-century London concert life. I pay particular attention to the links between concert finance and colonial exploitation and slave trading. The impact of the slave trade on British society extended far beyond building the nation as a colonial and trading powerhouse. Recent studies highlight how slavery and colonial exploitation shaped British identity and culture and fashioned its social mores. Subscribers to West End concert series included many of the country’s most powerful and privileged slave trading families. Whilst we should acknowledge there was little significant opposition to the slave trade at the time, an appreciation of the broader economic and political context is surely important if we are to develop an informed historical understanding of eighteenth-century London concert life.

Phil Dodds, “The Appropriate Scale of Music: Swedish and Scottish Musical Conization in Southern Africa, 1770–1850”

From the 1770s onwards, Scottish and Swedish travellers published detailed ethnographic descriptions and categorizations of southern African musical practices. Scots and Swedes, as overseers of the major missionary organizations in the region, led the large-scale projects of hymn-based “civilizing” and “musical education” that started in the 1810s. It was, furthermore, Scottish folk songs and nationalist anthems that

could be heard in the settlements of the colonial frontier from the 1820s onwards, and, at the end of the 1840s, explorers' collections of African musical instruments were put on display in Stockholm's museums. A key theme connecting all these diverse processes of musical colonization – including varied transcriptions, performances, collections, categorizations and compositions conducted by disconnected groups and individuals from smaller nations beyond the imperial centres – was a focus on music's scalar dimensions. (I mean here scale in the geographical rather than musical sense, although the two are connected.) Many musical colonizers assumed that music must address particular scales of social and cultural-geographical experience, including the nation and the landscape, as well as the musical performer's internal or emotional landscape. This formed the basis of their denigration of African music. Others – including but not only the missionaries – suggested that music should adhere to certain universal principles could address no other scale of purpose but the divine or the heavenly. This was the basis of an often-violent outlawing of indigenous musical practices, to be replaced with a new standard set in northern Europe. This conference contribution will discuss all this with reference to travellers like Anders Sparrman and Lady Anne Barnard; missionaries like Hans Peter Hallbeck and Mary and Robert Moffat; and Thomas Pringle, the settler, abolitionist and Romantic poet.

Kanav Gupta, “Reconstructing the musical lives of British residents in colonial India in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries”

This paper reconstructs the musical lives of British colonial residents in India between c. 1830 and 1870, a period marked by the consolidation of colonial administration and the increasing regulation of sound. Drawing on travel writing, private correspondence, diaries, and East India Company records from both British and Indian archives, it examines how music entered quotidian colonial lives as a form of familiar recreation as also a logistical problem. I focus on the writings of figures such as G.T. Vigne, J.C. Maitland, Emma Roberts, W.H. Sleeman, Harriet Tytler, and the Marchioness of Dufferin. These sources document a wide range of musical situations: Kashmiri ballads learned and transcribed on a hiking expedition, vina performances at elite entertainments, regimental ceremonies, amateur theatricals, piano playing in domestic interiors, and missionary hymnody, among others. Simultaneously, they also record sustained curiosity/discomfort with Indian sound, often expressed through comparisons, ridicule, and claims of excess or disorder. Listening often emerges here not as neutral perception but as a colonial disposition. Reading these personal writings alongside administrative documents enables a more precise account of how musical life was constantly shaped by imperial structures and colonial displacement. Company rulings that classified imported pianos as ineligible for military rebate, treating them as private recreation rather than professional equipment, clarify how official categories defined musical practice and separated domestic music-making from its more sanctioned forms. By bringing British and Indian archival materials into a single analytic frame, this paper hopes to offer a new perspective on colonial music history. It shifts attention away from cultural influence or exchange, toward the everyday conditions under which British settlers listened to, evaluated, and attempted to sustain their musical lives within imperial India.

Jens Hesselager, “18th and early 19th century musical visitors to the West Indies – real and imaginary. In search of Speneux, Fontalbe and Belinde. And Magdalena.”

Between March and October 1809, the name of certain Mr. Speneux appears in a number of announcements in the West Indian newspaper, *St Croix Gazette*. Mr. Speneux appears to have been a violinist and a singer, and is at one point presented as a “Scholar du Conservatoire de Musique at Paris”.

While in St. Croix, he offered musical tuition and gave concerts, first at the Dutch Church, later at the Danish Church, and then at the Theatrical Society. Full programs of his concerts were printed in the newspaper. The last newspaper announcement bearing his signature before he again left the island, however, had a different agenda: In it, he offered a reward to anyone who could return to him his run away "Negro Girl Magdalena".

One item included in one of his concerts is an "Air of the Opera La Colonie by Sacchini." This work was originally an Italian intermezzo, titled *L'isola d'amore* (Rome 1766), the action of which took place in an unnamed island in (or near) India. In 1775, meanwhile, the intermezzo was translated and transformed into a French (Parisian) opéra comique, *La Colonie*, with the island now being an island near the French colony, St. Martinique. In 1776 it was performed in Copenhagen, in Danish, with the island now being located somewhere in the vicinity of the (Danish) West Indies. Mr Fontalbe of the French and Danish versions of the work is the gouveneur of this half-imaginary, half-real, but in any case unnamed, Carribean island, which happens to be very short of women. So much so that all female visitors – such as Belinde – are obliged to marry within a very limited time after arrival.

This paper will seek to trace the musical travels of both *La Colonie* (and its fictional characters), and of Mr. Speneux (and the run away slave, Magdalena), and ask how the types of knowledge that can be derived from studying each contrast or complement each other, and also question to what extent the 'real' spills into – or are repressed from – the 'imaginary' and vice versa.

Halvor K Hosar, "Paradoxical Internationalism: Johann Abraham Peter Schulz's Symphonies in Trondheim"

In Norway's only major eighteenth-century music manuscript collection, which belonged to the county musicians Johan Daniel (1714–1787) and Johan Henrich Berlin (1741–1807), one finds five symphonies attributed to a 'Schultz(e)'. Four further symphony manuscripts are found in Härnösand and Schwerin, bringing the total number of works up to six.

Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747–1800) was a German-born composer who was court Kapellmeister in Copenhagen 1787–95 and is an important figure in the Danish and North German Lied and opera. Bertil van Boer alone has written about these symphonies, in the standard reference work *The Symphonic Repertoire*. Boer was only aware of two Trondheim manuscripts and suggested that these were commissions from Schulz's years in Copenhagen: their 'provincial' provenance indicated a decline in interest in locally produced symphonies in Denmark during the 1780s and 1790s. In RISM, the entire attribution is considered dubious.

Source and style studies instead suggests that: The symphonies fit into the early North German symphonic tradition; Schulz is the correct composer of all six symphonies. This is supported by their presence in Schwerin, where Schulz' music was strongly cultivated. They are most likely early works; Johan Daniel's monogram is found on three manuscripts that are also in his handwriting, and his death in 1787 makes a Copenhagen commission unlikely.

These observations seem to fit into a pattern where the Berlins eschewed Scandinavian 'locals' in favour of a broad repertoire that was most likely sourced through an international network.

Eva Hvidt, "Asger Hamerik's Time in Baltimore"

The Danish composer Asger Hamerik (1843-1923) grew up in Golden Age Copenhagen, and later he had a very unusual international career. In his youth he sought new paths by becoming a student of Hans von

Bülbow in Berlin and later a favorite protégé of Hector Berlioz in Paris. After some wandering years in Europe, he ended up spending a full 27 years as director of the American Peabody Institute in Baltimore. This talk will be about the challenges Hamerik faced in the “new world”, which, when he arrived in 1871, was still marked by the consequences of the American Civil War (1861-65). Hamerik probably experienced some of the country’s folk music, e.g. the Dixie songs of the southern states, ragtime or the Negro spirituals of the blacks, but first and foremost he related to the classical-romantic musical tradition that he knew and that was alive among the immigrants in America. How did it affect his music, and how did he manage to organize musical life at the conservatory in Baltimore?

Axel Klein, “On the challenges of writing a musical history of Ireland”

The last [4] *History of Irish Music* was published in Dublin in 1905.* Three further editions with but minor revisions appeared in 1906, 1913 and 1927 but do not significantly alter the fact that some 120 years have passed since this book originally appeared. Despite an enormous upsurge in musicology in Ireland since about 1990, a very active musicological society with several conferences each year, a book series, and a peer-reviewed online journal this has, so far, not resulted in a new account of Irish musical history. Why is this so? What are the obstacles? Where are the challenges?

Since 2021, the author is in the process of writing the first-ever empirical history of Irish music that focuses entirely on art music – beginning with medieval chant and ending with the avantgarde of the year 2025. It will be a narrative in eight chronological chapters, conservatively structured along established periods of Western music history. The manuscript will be complete in 2026. Focusing on music composed in Ireland and by Irish musicians elsewhere, this book will outline the role that art music has played in Irish cultural history. It will demonstrate how composers worked in a European context and at the same time contributed to national identity and nation-building in a country shaped by a history of colonialism, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. The paper for this conference will explain the rationale for this book and various challenges encountered in the preparation of the manuscript.

Holly Lawson, “*Ich bin Hamlet der Däne*’: Shakespeare on the move in the career of Felicity Vestvali

After 1863, Felicity Vestvali (1828[?]-1880) never returned to the operatic stage, instead turning her hand to Shakespeare’s oeuvre. Most famous for her roles as Hamlet and Romeo, Vestvali’s refashioning of her artistic identity signalled a decisive shift for the actress professionally—to appeal to audiences beyond the opera house. Such a manoeuvre enabled Vestvali to engage with a broader range of repertoire, travel to major and provincial cities across Europe, and become exposed to new modes of criticism. Vestvali’s career allows us to trace broader undercurrents surging amongst critical waters, questions attending to nineteenth-century gender relations, Shakespearean and operatic voices, and competing national ownerships over the Bard. Such contestations were packaged into discussions about what qualities were needed to enact affective pathos upon spectators, qualities with which Vestvali constantly experimented.

In delineating Vestvali’s itinerant career across London, Amsterdam, and Hamburg from 1867-70, this paper illuminates how Vestvali foregrounded her mobility as a site of agency to evade categorisation. It will explore how, as a Shakespearean actress, her voice, body, and gender were received and recalibrated in dialectical relation with her audiences as she travelled, evincing how her traversing of boundary—geographical, gendered, and generic—aptly lends itself to current debates within global (opera and theatre) studies. In so doing, this paper not only illuminates a forgotten story of a formidable female thespian in the

mid-nineteenth century, but situates her within broader questions of staging gender, cultural exchange, and the voice as a repository of identity, memory, and resistance.

Matthew Madeley, “A Synthesis of East and West? John Foulds, Maud MacCarthy, Theosophy and the combination of European and Indian Music.”

Even prior to his appointment at the Director of European Music for All-India Radio in 1935, the British composer John Foulds (1880-1939) was fascinated by the traditional music of India. This interest was chiefly inspired by his second wife, Irish violinist and Indian music specialist Maud MacCarthy (1882-1967). MacCarthy was a protégé of Annie Besant, the president of the Theosophical Society from 1907, and travelled to India with her from 1905 to 1909. Hence, MacCarthy and Foulds’ interest in Indian music and philosophy was strongly coloured by the tenets of Theosophy, a spiritual movement which aimed to combine the ancient spiritual wisdom of India with the esoteric philosophies of Europe. Foulds and MacCarthy’s interest in Indian music and philosophy permeates their artistic creations. In this paper I shall trace the influence of Indian music on Foulds and MacCarthy’s output from MacCarthy’s lecture-recitals on ‘Some Indian Conception of Music’ in 1912 to Foulds’ creation of an ensemble combining European and Indian instruments in 1935. I shall also consider the influence Foulds and MacCarthy had on the reception of Indian music in Britain and on professional musical life in India. Through this study I wish to consider the relationship between authenticity and appropriation as Foulds and MacCarthy attempt to ‘authentically’ study traditional Indian music whilst appropriating it in service of their wider spiritual search for a musical syncretism between East and West. In doing so I wish to uncover the complex relationship between music, spirituality and empire under the British Raj.

Thomas Overdijk, “Popular Entertainment and Biological Essentialism in the Colonial Netherlands”

This paper examines how nineteenth-century Dutch cultural institutions consolidated a national narrative of a “Second Golden Age” by aestheticizing a colonial extractivist logic. Building on archival material and musicological literature, I argue that ethnographic sound recording and racialized music performance mirrored colonial extraction, transforming cultural practices and their practitioners into objects of academic possession and entertainment value. The entanglements of popular culture and scientific racism manifested in notions of “primitive music”, presented in the rhetoric of what Renato Rosaldo calls *imperialist nostalgia*. This “colonial spectacle” was institutionalized in public spaces such as the Amsterdam Artis Zoo and its ethnological society founded in 1838, the Rijksmuseum where Dutch art was retrospectively framed into colonial “heroisms”, and the 1883 International Colonial Exhibition where people from the colonies were made to stage musical performances and minstrel shows such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin. This provided access for the public as well as for scholars to study “the exotic” at home, enabled by transcontinental colonial networks built on forced labor regimes and coerced mobility, the same networks trafficking in looted goods and enslaved bodies. These scholars would go on to take their phonographs into the colonies and extract sound akin to how their settler counterparts extracted gold, spices, and forced labor. This exchange between center and periphery ultimately allowed the colonial elite to present and uphold white supremacist fantasies in novel ways by building bridges between science and entertainment, fantasies that were nevertheless captured in established racial hierarchies naturalized in the project of European modernity.

Erik Steinskog, “Missionaries and Modernism: Fartein Valen between Madagascar and West-Norway.”

In the 5-volume *Norges Musikkhistorie* (2000), it is argued that “modernism” came late to Norway, among other reasons the fact that Norway gained independence in 1905, and thus that the “national” romanticism therefore maybe lived longer. The authors of *Norges Musikkhistorie* Vol. 4, claims that the 1920s is where the big divide occurs (Vollsnes 2000, 4: 20). Among the most famous “modernist” composers in Norway in this time is Fartein Valen, also because he wrote atonal or in a “dissonating twelve-tone” style (cf. Grinde 1981, 285).

Fartein Valen was born in Stavanger in 1887, but lived on Madagascar from 1889 to 1895, as his father was a missionary. Nils Grinde, in his earlier one-volume *Norges musikkhistorie* (1981, first ed 1971) claims that Valen’s “personal tonal language” are established with Valen’s Trio for violin, cello, and piano, Op. 5, composed between 1917 and 1924. According to Valen, the second theme in the first movement of the trio is a Malagasy folk song that he heard from his Malagasy nanny, Maria, while living in Madagascar. In this paper I want to discuss the relations between missionary activity and modernity, between a local Norwegian context and a global world, found in folk music from Madagascar (real or imagined – although I will argue that there are strong similarities to a larger repertoire for the valiha), and how this folk music and the contemporary modernism could meet.

Pete Yelding, “Restoring innovative agency to perpetually othered musicians: the case of the Lucknow-Shahjahanpur Gharana in late nineteenth-century Northern Europe”

The dominant narrative of the history of musical innovations in nineteenth-century Europe tends to centre the stories of a select few composers and the ways in which their ideas and inspiration were packaged in autonomous musical works. The musical creativity of international musicians, often colonised subjects, that were observed as diplomatic show pieces or that were displayed in human zoos during this period remains largely overlooked. The oral history of the Lucknow- Shahjahanpur Gharānā, a hereditary lineage of Hindustani music instrumentalists, offers a rare insight into the spirit of invention of such international musicians. This lineage lays claim to some of the earliest performances of Hindustani music (and undoubtedly the earliest sarod performances) in Northern Europe. Two instances of such performances by nineteenth-century exponents of the *gharānā* will be presented, one in England and one in France. The innovation and unexpected entanglements that these two performances symbolise will invite perceptions of who gets, and does not get, to be regarded as innovators in Northern European music histories to be reconsidered. As a result this paper will engage directly with broader questions about the extent to which a musical work-oriented imagination flattens and overlooks musical knowledge and its histories within the European subcontinent, as well as further afield.