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Eduardo Herrera: "Latin America and the Decolonization of Classical Music"

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O*pen Access Musicology (OAM)* is a freely available, web-based, multi-author essay collection. Part academic journal, part textbook, and part collaboration platform, this pedagogical resource for the music history instructor manifests a broader philosophical response to current curricular challenges as a collection of pedagogical problem-solving tools. The teachers and scholars behind *OAM* reached a new project milestone with the 2022 publication of *OAM's* second volume. Those familiar with the format of the first volume will see much of the same in volume two. Each essay begins with a personal vignette in which the author or authors reflect on their personal identities and educational experiences. The anecdotes shared in volume two add a compelling, relatable dimension to the essays—particularly for readers of color. The 2022 volume also contains more disciplinary diversity. Contributors

from a broad array of educational institutions provide more representation from the fields of performance, ethnomusicology, and music theory. To mark the publication of volume two, the contributors to this review reflect on the practical uses of this resource in a variety of institutional settings and class configurations.

A Tool for Teaching Additional Modes of Research and Presentation

Open Access Musicology is published as an electronic, open-access resource to ensure that student access to *OAM* materials is not limited by prohibitive costs. However, “open access” as it relates to the *OAM* project means more than freely available resources.

While today’s students tend to struggle with reading long and difficult texts, the writing throughout *OAM*’s second volume is designed to be highly accessible and reader-friendly. Contributors present their methods and arguments with exceptional clarity and without jargon. Along with the authors’ personable tone, students will appreciate the brief author statements that preface each article. In these statements, the authors share introductory anecdotes explaining how they got acquainted with the topics of their respective essays. Even if students can’t personally relate to the specificities of an author’s experience, these object statements explain how one might develop a research interest in such a way that encourages students to explore a project on their own. The articles are vetted by undergraduate students before publication, which means that students also have a say in how all of these adjustments for audience are made in practice.

OAM editorial policies are also designed to support the creation of a textbook-like resource that offers more “open access” to the enriching insights of emerging areas of research. By means of illustration, Jennifer Fraser and Gabriela Linares’s contribution to the volume, on the digital-humanities project *Song in the Sumatran Highlands* (conducted from July 2020 to June 2021), exposes students to what editorial board member Sarah Day-O’Connell refers to as “the critical approaches and the interdisciplinarity that actually characterize the field [of musicology].”¹ Using the Scalar platform, Fraser and Linares digitally share and archive their research on *saluang*—a Minangkabau vocal and flute genre from West Sumatra, Indonesia. Scalar’s interactive website allows viewers to engage with the songs and texts that comprise the repertoire, the individuals involved in its performance and preservation, and the geographic locations connected to this musical tradition from over a fifty-year span. Particularly noteworthy is the digital mapping of *saluang*, in which each song is geotagged

1. “Open Access Musicology,” uploaded by AMS Pedagogy Study Group YouTube account, November 25, 2017, 34 min., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tRBOKperfQ>.

and viewable on various map formats (plain, terrain, or satellite). These innovations in the digital humanities enable musicologists to present their research in a way that engages the people of West Sumatra—making it more accessible, enriching, and inclusive, especially for the communities to whom the music belongs.

What can a reading assignment like this accomplish in a music history survey course that a comparable assignment in a topical course devoted to digital-humanities tools and methodologies cannot? Fraser and Linares organize their discussion around foundational epistemological questions, namely: what can students gain from engaging with ethnographic research, and how do various modes of knowledge dissemination (e.g., published ethnography, song archives, digital mapping) shape the reception of such research? To foster class discussion that embraces the messiness of historical investigation alongside still additional issues commonly encountered in music history surveys, the essays throughout the volume likewise foreground the complexities of defining key terms and concepts like “style,” “classical music,” “Latin America,” “decolonization,” “ethnography,” “storytelling,” “history,” “narratives,” “fieldwork,” “musical salon,” and “the Other.”

From this perspective, taken together, the two volumes of *OAM* contain articles that address topics relevant to each era of music history. Volume one includes an essay that addresses “extreme early music,”² two essays on seventeenth-century topics, and two essays on twentieth-century topics. Volume two complements the content of volume one with essays on sixteenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twenty-first-century topics. Instructors can introduce their students to each period of music history with essays drawn from either of *OAM*’s two volumes. Additionally, volume two includes essays about music in Latin America, Indonesia, and India, a noteworthy shift that offers educators the opportunity to resist the Eurocentric lens through which music history has long been taught. While putting *OAM* to work as a central text for a course might not present a cohesive narrative of music history in the manner students may expect, its contents can introduce them to specific types of music scholarship related to every period of music history while also expanding the geographical and epistemological purview of a music history survey course.

2. Samuel Dorf, “Ancient Mesopotamian Music, the Politics of Reconstruction, and Extreme Early Music,” in *Open Access Musicology*, vol. 1, ed. Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein (Lever Press, 2020), [https://www.fulcrum.org/epubs/j098zd015?locale=en#/6/18\[OAM-0007\]!/4/2\[ch03\]/2\[header0301\]/2/2\[p30\]/1:0](https://www.fulcrum.org/epubs/j098zd015?locale=en#/6/18[OAM-0007]!/4/2[ch03]/2[header0301]/2/2[p30]/1:0).

A Tool for Implementing Problem-Based Learning

Instead of traversing a traditional music-historical narrative, a course developed around the content of *Open Access Musicology* would survey various modes of inquiry as exhibited by the contextual and historical studies, ethnomusicological explorations, and theoretical analyses of historical repertoire published in each volume. Additionally, the material presented in these volumes is suitable for teaching music history with case studies as described by Sara Haefeli in *Teaching Music History with Cases: A Teacher's Guide*.³ By structuring an introductory music course around the various cases presented in *OAM*, instructors would grant students “windows” into various periods of music history, making it a valuable resource for educators seeking to transcend the traditional music history survey. Moreover, the essays, especially those in volume two, could inspire Problem-Based Learning activities that build on the methodological models that the authors provide throughout the publication.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an active-learning framework that presents students with hypothetical situations to navigate by posing questions that do not have easy or straightforward answers.⁴ In stark contrast with the age-old “sage on the stage” approach to teaching, PBL is “inquiry-driven, student-centered, experiential, and collaborative.”⁵ Rather than lecture, PBL instructors introduce open-ended problems to their students that connect to the real world. Then, working alone or in groups, students conduct self-directed research through which they learn to gather information and improve their understanding of the issues related to the particular problem under investigation. Finally, students share their findings, present potential solutions to the problem, and reflect on what they learned from the activity.

Rebecca Cypess’s contribution to *OAM*, for instance, titled “Musical Salons of the Enlightenment: Platforms for Women’s Musical Agency,” uses case studies to describe how musical salons in eighteenth-century Europe offered women an otherwise nonexistent platform for expression and agency. Cypess also explains how musical salons reflected and shaped the musical experiences

3. Sara Haefeli, *Teaching Music History with Cases: A Teacher's Guide* (Routledge, 2023).

4. The implementation of Problem-Based Learning in music classrooms has been explored in Philip Duker, Kris Shaffer, and Daniel Stevens, “Problem-Based Learning in Music: A Guide for Instructors,” *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, vol. 2, <http://flipcamp.org/engagingstudents2/essays/dukerShafferStevens.html>; Natalie Sarrazin, ed., *Problem-Based Learning in the College Music Classroom* (Routledge, 2019); and Hon-Lun Yang, “Teaching Music History at Hong Kong Baptist University: Problem-Based Learning and Outcome-Based Teaching and Learning,” this *Journal* 4, no. 2 (2014): 329–32.

5. Daniel Stevens, “Part 1: Problem-Based Learning in the Music Classroom, A Rationale,” in Philip Duker, Kris Shaffer, and Daniel Stevens, “Problem-Based Learning in Music: A Guide for Instructors,” *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy*, vol. 2, <http://flipcamp.org/engagingstudents2/essays/stevens.html>.

and practices of women in the eighteenth century. After reading the article, instructors could task their students with establishing an imaginary yet comparable musical salon today. Just as women were not privy to performing publicly or engaging fully in concert life in eighteenth-century Europe, students might consider the ways in which underrepresented populations lack access to mainstream musical outlets today. How might the musical activities of such populations be analogous to musical salons of the eighteenth century, and how might those involved benefit from them?

The methodologies employed throughout the essays of *OAM* volume two are diverse and conceived in such a way that their foundations are transparent to students. The essays offer students easy-to-follow examples of musicological inquiry and argumentation that could be replicated in PBL lessons that either use or echo the essays' methodological and conceptual models. For example, Eduardo Herrera's "Latin America and the Decolonization of Classical Music" introduces the reader to the impact of colonization on cultural and musical practices, and through three case studies demonstrates the "complications, failures, and successes that emerged with efforts to decolonize classical music" (p. 2). While introducing students to decolonial initiatives in the field of music, this essay could also provide a jumping-off point for a PBL activity in which students are asked to put themselves in the position of a consultant. Students could be asked to consider how the organizations at the center of each of Herrera's case studies could improve on their work or how the various organizations could have learned from each other's mistakes and successes. To engage in a higher level of creativity, students could be asked to create a new organization with decolonial aims similar to those addressed in each case study based in an area of the world they are familiar with. This activity would encourage students to consider the colonization and decolonization of music culture, practice, and education from a "boots-on-the-ground" perspective.

The accessible language and transparent nature of the methodologies at play in each of the essays published in both volumes of *OAM* make them ideal pedagogical resources: the articles would work well for introducing students to the process of reading musicological scholarship while also providing material for Problem-Based Learning activities that encourage students to develop their own projects by following the straightforward examples presented by *OAM*'s authors. Moreover, the inclusion throughout the volume of evocative imagery—from photographs of Latin American composers and Sumatran musicians to paintings of women musicians from the eighteenth century to images of Hindi musicians, and more—could further help readers of color feel a sense of belonging and see themselves as part of history in the classical music sphere.

A Tool for Making Sustainable Open-Access Music History Materials (More) Attainable

In 2019, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Dynamic Coalition’s “Recommendation on OER” was adopted by UNESCO member states, thereby establishing a “normative framework” for pursuit of the following five objectives in connection with Open Educational Resources (alternatively referred to as OER in the way that Open Access is referenced as OA):

1. Build capacity of stakeholders to create, access, reuse, adapt, and redistribute OER
2. Develop supportive policy
3. Encourage inclusive and equitable quality OER
4. Nurture the creation of sustainability models for OER
5. Facilitate international cooperation⁶

While such a development could be viewed as evidence of the largescale importance or potential of OER, a 2023 study by music education scholar Tanya Allen quantifies a “general unawareness” of OER among music faculty in the United States. Allen’s results indicate that most (57 percent) of the participants in her cross-sectional survey of music faculty teaching at postsecondary institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) “lacked awareness of OER,” with “76 participants (19%) having heard the term but knew little about it and 158 participants (39%) not aware of OER before completing the questionnaire.”⁷ This is not an indictment of music faculty in the United States. On the contrary, these seemingly incongruous data points call attention to the larger disconnect that exists between increasingly global discussions about the value of OER in the abstract and the logistical challenges that inhibit use of OER in everyday teaching practices. Indeed, Allen’s findings generally substantiate the analytical framework proposed by Glenda Cox and Henry Trotter for understanding patterns in OER adoption. In their “OER Adoption Pyramid,”⁸ *access*, defined as “access to infrastructure: computers, internet, electricity,” and *permission*, defined as “permission to use/create OER, as determined by institutional IP policy,” are foundational to OER adoption.

6. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, “Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER),” accessed June 20, 2025, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373755/PDF/373755eng.pdf.multi.page=3>.

7. Tanya Allen, “Awareness and Future Use of Open Educational Resources by Music Faculty,” *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 41, no. 2 (2023): 53–54.

8. The OER Adoption Pyramid diagram can be viewed in Allen, 49.

They prop up *awareness*, defined as “awareness of OER, the concept, and how it differs from other educational resources,” *capacity*, defined as “capacity to find, use, create and/or upload OER personally or with support,” *availability*, defined as “availability of relevant OER of requisite quality,” and *volition*, defined as the volition of individuals and/or institutions “to adopt OER.”⁹ As the foundational layers of the pyramid, both “access” and “permission” are defined as environmental or “externally determined” conditions that make possible the “volition” to adopt OER.¹⁰

This means that, for musicologists, the added demands of prohibitively expensive licensing fees and the necessity of media-rich digital formats for publication are not just limitations on the commercial viability of available open-access music history textbooks. They are also field-specific obstacles that inhibit the development of both musicologists’ adoption of OER and that of new open-access materials for use in music history curriculums. In this landscape, the principles of design and editing that led to the publication of both volumes of *OAM* offer a path forward. Specifically, broader field-wide investment in *OAM* as a community-centered pedagogical project could help musicologists disentangle the “externally determined” limitations on the expansion of music history OER from those barriers to use (and awareness) of more practical and sustainable music history OER that can and should be overcome. (Spoiler alert: sweeping reforms of US intellectual property law will have to occur before there is an “app,” or easy-to-implement classroom tool, for making an all-in-one open-access resource that inclusively covers music that is not in the public domain.)

Initial research suggests that, after obtaining “awareness,” availability of the resources required to incorporate an OER into practices of music teaching is the most reliable determining factor for OER adoption. In Allen’s study, available “support,” i.e., the “time, money, knowledge, training, or other specific support” needed for “adopting or creating an open textbook,” ranked second in importance after financial benefits to students in the study participants’ list of criteria for evaluating OER for use (or creation).¹¹ The refrain “I have to write my own sometimes, even though I’m not the best person to do it” reverberates through the anecdotal evidence compiled by Rachel E. Scott and Anne Shelley in their 2023 study, “‘Having a Textbook Locks Me into a Particular Narrative’: Affordable and Open Educational Resources in Music Higher Education.”¹² With the help of their interviewees, Scott and Shelley catalog the sometimes

9. Allen.

10. Allen.

11. Allen, 54.

12. Rachel E. Scott and Anne Shelley, “‘Having a Textbook Locks Me into a Particular Narrative’: Affordable and Open Educational Resources in Music Higher Education,” *Notes* 79, no. 3 (March 2023): 323.

arduous and often unpredictable labors of reviewing, cobbling together, and locating last-minute replacements for available open-access resources as a low or no-cost alternative for a more conventional (and more expensive) comprehensive textbook. Several study participants indicated that, should this work not satisfy all of one's curricular needs, then they opt to undertake the time-intensive process of creating their own supplements to such replacement materials—the needs for which have not always fallen within a single educator's strengths and/or immediate area(s) of expertise.

As a platform for collaboration in these efforts, *OAM* provides a far more sustainable alternative. Although published in two distinct volumes, each individual essay in *OAM* by self-selected experts in their respective fields is archived and searchable by author and topic on the *OAM* website, providing instructors with a *changeable* “build-your-own-textbook” option, of sorts. Currently, instructors can choose to assign any or all of the thirteen essays, which cover topics including early music, Italian music, English music, music of the Americas, chamber music, musical notation, colonialism, women in music, and ethnomusicology. Imagine what new kinds of adaptability could be achieved with more contributions. In just 3,000–6,000 words (according to *OAM* submission guidelines), individual musicologists could help other instructors make a variety of “new” textbooks—including the one they might be looking for—without taking on the gargantuan effort of creating an entirely new and comprehensive resource from scratch.

In volume two of *OAM*, relevant audio and score excerpts are provided in the form of contributor-curated hyperlinks. When such supplementary musical media are not provided by the contributor or collected and shared as a part of a digital-humanities project (as in Fraser and Linares's essay), they take the form of YouTube videos, Spotify backups, and links to scores on the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP). A publisher landing page has been added for the musical examples on YouTube that the text of *OAM* essays engage with the most, ensuring that student and instructor alike have reliable metadata for the corresponding recordings (and don't have to go searching for it themselves). Some contributors also provide suggestions for further reading.

The other impediments to OER adoption cataloged by Scott and Shelley can be attributed to what *OAM* editors conceive of as the growing divide they want to bridge between musicology and the more narrowly defined music history survey curriculums that musicology faculty are tasked with delivering. Consider, for instance, the irreconcilable nature of two of the most urgent pedagogical problems that are moving more and more instructors toward OER as alternatives to traditional resources. Where some participants in Scott and Shelley's study struggled to engage students with conventional textbooks as opaque “piles of facts,” others lamented being shackled to a single, all-encompassing

narrative.¹³ “If you’re using a text in music history,” one interviewee suggested, then “that’s pretty much the narrative.”¹⁴ When both concerns are present, the assumed audience of the instructor becomes larger than those sitting in their classroom. We might be quick to blame this set of problems on the cost of the resource in question, as an expensive resource means the instructor “has to use it all.” But this does not wholly account for why the routine practice of identifying gaps in a piece of scholarship and critiquing the methodological choices that produced it can feel more foreign in the music history classroom. The push and pull of larger debates surrounding canon formation in Western classical music can inadvertently put undergraduate students at the center of historiographical discussions for which they are not fully prepared.

Concerns about “quality control” raised in evaluations of OER also tend to speak more to an instructor’s relationships outside of the classroom than they do to the needs of an instructor’s students. Consider, for instance, the remarks of a textbook author interviewed by Scott and Shelley, who, after some deliberation, opted not to publish open access:

Currently there is no [similar] textbook carried by a publisher and we are trying to reinvent the curriculum from the ground up. We wanted to go with an established publisher so we can get reviews and guidance from the publisher; we wanted to shift discourse in the field, and so we needed that support.¹⁵

Given that contributors to *OAM* “get reviews,” a comment like this one would seem to hinge on a certain defensiveness pertaining to the distinction between scholar-created and peer-reviewed materials, on the one hand, and “other” available content. This isn’t to say that we should all succumb to student pressures and embrace Wikipedia, or something similar, as a primary source for course materials; rather, it is an invitation for reflection. At what point do reasonable concerns about the depth and scholarly rigor of open-access materials elide with questions about what it means to successfully navigate a career as a musicology professor? With the demands of teaching and service in academia growing ever higher, and research time and resources in even shorter supply, when are musicology faculty *not* operating from a defensive posture?

As a twenty-first-century model for how musicologists can collaborate on open-access materials tailored to our specific needs, *Open Access Musicology* begins to move beyond such hangups. The relative length of a contribution to *OAM* limits the time/expense of preparing a longer, standard-length publication that, even while potentially reaching a large audience, may not carry

13. Scott and Shelley, 312.

14. Quoted in Scott and Shelley, 319.

15. Quoted in Scott and Shelley, 325.

much more weight in a tenure case. The pedagogical aims of *OAM* also provide potentially welcome opportunities for advanced graduate students to begin publishing sooner than they might otherwise; graduate students might share some of their preliminary findings in essays that model a methodological approach for other students. Looking ahead, a critical mass of *OAM* contributions could reduce the labor required to adjust courses for expanded use of included materials. Admittedly, in such uncertain times, this is not much of an incentive for anyone to take on another *OAM* essay or similar project, but the commercial alternatives tied to more exclusionary platforms for streaming cannot offer such motivation. In the long run, undue reliance on obsolete media players and new editions of conventional textbooks will likely create more work for an instructor, while an OER that can offer carefully edited coverage of more teaching topics over time will require less work to employ.

Are you concerned, as one of Scott and Shelley's study participants was, that "students are increasingly uncritical of resources they can access online[,] . . . don't read past the first paragraph[,] and [are] not really assessing in a critical way the source of the materials, authenticity, [and] author credentials?"¹⁶ The first paragraph of each *OAM* essay introduces both the author and the author's professional credentials in a way that invites the reader to read more critically, well before the discussions of methodology included in each essay explicitly address the topic. Are you worried, as several Scott and Shelley study participants were, that an OER might not prepare students for "success in graduate admissions" in the same way conventional music history textbooks have?¹⁷ To be sure, methodical review of a conventional music history text that provides "comprehensive" historical coverage remains the most efficient way to prepare for a "conventional" and "comprehensive" graduate entrance exam. However, this does little to prepare students with an understanding of what direction(s) graduate work in musicology might take and what larger impact their research might have upon completion. Students working their way through *OAM* volume two will learn about how musicological scholarship can be inspired by literature review (e.g., Herrera's reading of a "provocative essay," p. 1), world travel, interest in specific performers/historical performance practice, and/or an author's flair for the decorative arts.¹⁸ They will also discover that scholarship does not have to take the form of a conventional textbook or encyclopedia. It can fuel the creation of commercial recordings, support the development of interactive music maps/timelines, involve interview collections, help to build song

16. Quoted in Scott and Shelley, 323.

17. Scott and Shelley, 311.

18. See Gurminder Kaur Bhogal, "Racialized Ornament in the Exotic Musical Imagination: Reflections on Framing and Decoloniality," in *Open Access Musicology*, vol. 2, ed. Daniel Barolsky and Louis Epstein (Lever Press, 2022), <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/85770>.

archives, and drive the organization of public conferences and performances. Scholarship can also equip individuals with the agency to see gaps in their own training and to better provide for future generations of music students. Isn't the undergraduate student who is prepared to read and think critically in these ways more prepared for graduate study than the student who can place out of a music history review course?

In closing, it is worth underscoring the extent to which the *Open Access Musicology* project supports the objectives of the UNESCO "Recommendation on OER": a "normative framework" for the creation, development, and support of OER. First (objective one), as use of included materials expands, the emphasis *OAM* puts on the processes and problem solving entailed by the often messy work of musicological research will "build capacity" of music history students, musicology graduate students, and professional scholars as members of a larger community of "stakeholders" in OER. Undergraduates working with *OAM* essays are not confined in their thinking by a singular historical narrative, and contributors become more practiced in the art of engaging audiences beyond the currently besieged ivory tower. The involvement of both scholars and students in a multitiered peer-review process familiarizes students who may aspire to graduate study with the day-to-day activities of the musicologist outside the music history classroom more immediately, while also addressing widely reported "quality control" concerns about OER in an inclusive fashion (objective three). This workflow gives *OAM* the functionality to "facilitate cooperation" on a large scale that could become increasingly international in scope (objective five). Or, at the very least, the data *OAM* editors are collecting on "how [*OAM*] articles are being used in classrooms around the world" could "develop supporting policy" in the form of new evidence-based teaching practices for use of OER in the music history classroom (objective two). Where students might see an uncomfortable lack of twenty-first-century conveniences (i.e., fully searchable encyclopedic coverage of a course topic, or immediate access to associated audio/visual material), instructors will see the beginnings of a sustainable method of developing and implementing open-access teaching materials for widespread use in music history courses (objective four).