The Politics of Performing the Other: Curating an Early Music Concert

By Ryan Koons & Elisabeth Le Guin

"Early music" is the term generally accepted for the study and presentation of pre-modern and early modern European musics, with special attention to period performance practices including Gregorian chant, Josquin, Monteverdi, Vivaldi, the Bach clan, Porpora, and Handel. The list goes on up through early Beethoven, though claims have been staked as far forward as Schoenberg (Kenyon 1988). Issues of cultural representation or, more importantly, mis-representation, rarely arise with this repertoire: the marketing of concerts, artists, and recordings remains typically and unambiguously Eurocentric.

Designing and implementing a concert with music from the nexus of Indigenous American and European colonial interactions brought us face to face with that Eurocentrism. Entitled "Imagining the New World," the 2015 winter UCLA Early Music Ensemble (EME) concert forced us to confront politics of representation, "authenticity," accuracy, and the very real potential to insult Indigenous peoples, all the while attempting to create a musically compelling performance.

This essay presents a dialogue on the processes of creating this concert, and on the fine lines between politics and performance between EME Director and UCLA Professor of Musicology Elisabeth Le Guin (ELG), 2014-15 EME Managing Director and ethnomusicology doctoral student Ryan Koons (RK), and later on, Chris Goertzen (CG), who reviewed our article for this volume and is currently Professor of Musicology at Southern Mississippi University.

ELG: After doing the administrative going-in-circles dance for over a decade, I was able to revive the UCLA EME as a standing ensemble in 2009. (There had been a twenty-year hiatus; the 1989 fracturing of UCLA's then-Music Department into three departments had caused the ensemble to be discontinued.) Since its rebirth, the EME has drawn an increasingly diverse group of musicians from across UCLA and the greater Los Angeles community. I am titular Director; the Managing Director, the post Ryan has held during the 2014-15 academic year, is a year-long teaching assistantship with extraordinary responsibilities, culminating in conceiving, researching, organizing, rehearsing, and directing the group in a formal concert.

RK: Part of the Managing Director's audition process involves a program proposal. I am a Native Americanist ethnomusicologist and my primary research derives from a decade-long ethnographic collaboration with the Florida-based Muskogee-Creek Native American community, Palachicola Tribal Town.

ELG: And you were the first ethnomusicology student to hold this TAship, to which any graduate student in the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music may apply.

RK: My proposal for the 2015 winter quarter concert outlined a program that musically portrayed something of the complexity of the colonial era. The repertoire encompassed: 1) excerpts from baroque operas, such as Henry Purcell's *The Indian Queen* and Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*; 2) music written by Indigenous peoples in the New World, such as the substantial body of sacred and instrumental works written by Guaraní, Moxo, and Chiquitano peoples from the Bolivian Jesuit *reducciones* ("mission towns"); and 3) some of the first pieces composed or published in the Americas, like the Peruvian Quechua hymn "Hanaq Pachap Kusikuynin;" the Nahuatl hymn "Dios Itlaçontzine" from México; and "Membertou's Song," the first transcription and setting of a Native American song by a European. Other pieces, such as "Ahey for and Aho," from a 1614 British masque with Native American characters, or Jean-Baptiste Lully's "Recit de l'Europe," which features singers portraying Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, also treat Indigenous peoples, topics, or politics.

I wanted to feature music by or about Native Americans as cultural "Others." This concept became the foundation for "Imagining the New World." Much of the repertoire, especially pieces by European composers, was downright ethnocentric. Many pieces exhibited Europeans' cultural appropriation, exoticization, and blatant ignorance of Indigenous peoples, attitudes that continue to plague the realities and traditions of Native Americans to this day. Yet these pieces combined to present a historically accurate, if deplorable, side of the colonial narrative. Although uncomfortable, we ought not shy away from this history. We chose to meet it head on and attempt to educate our audience through this music.



The UCLA Early Music Ensemble performs its concert "Imagining the new World" in the Powell Library Rotunda on March 7, 2015. Photo by Henry Lim.

ELG: By virtue of what we are, we were in a good position to do something like this. Like most early music ensembles, the UCLA EME operates at the margins of "standard" repertoire of so-called Western Classical Music (WCM), playing and singing music from before the "common era," generally conceived to begin around 1750. (The studied blandness of the terms I have placed in scare quotes is itself telling.) We are thereby in a slightly better position to ask such questions of ourselves than, for example, the UCLA Philharmonia, a student symphony orchestra unambiguously dedicated to the central repertories of WCM.

However, I do not mean to suggest that ethical considerations have not crossed the radar screens of the major institutions of WCM, such as those symphony orchestras. In the last fifteen years, a body of academic and public controversy has arisen over certain beloved canonic or mainstream works that contain ethically problematic representations of Otherness. The most notorious case of all, in fact, is "early music": J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion (*1740-49) contains prominent and overtly anti-Semitic passages. From the symphonic repertoire, Antonin Dvorák's ninth symphony, the so-called "New World" symphony of 1893, appropriates and "invents" Negro spirituals and Indian themes as presented in Longfellow's 1855 narrative poem, *Song of Hiawatha*.

RK: Representing or co-opting objects, ideas, or practices from another culture or group ties into situational power dynamics. The more power borrowers have, the more easily they can appropriate from the disempowered and the fewer repercussions they suffer. Countless examples abound, from exoticism in WCM (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Taylor 2007) to the illegal sampling of a recording of an Indigenous Taiwanese Amis song in "Return to Innocence," the official song of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Chang 2010). Other examples include Indigenous Nahua adopting European concepts of the Other in colonial-era New Spain (Klor de Alva 1997), and the seemingly ever-present legal battles waged around copyright infringement of popular music songs (Hamm 1989; Snyder 2015).

ELG: Public discourse about instances like these has initiated a lot of immoderate rhetoric, but also some useful and thoughtful summaries of the options available to the would-be concert presenter of ethically questionable material. These options range from the radical (never perform potentially offensive compositions), to various compromises (bowdlerization or censorship though strategic cutting), to the interpretive (symposia, copious program notes). For further reading on these options, see Braatz 2004; Marshall 2012; Tabachnick 2014; and Taruskin 1995.

I should mention that the UCLA Philharmonia, under its current director Dr. Neal Stulberg, has made efforts to address the notorious ethnocentrism and conservatism of symphony orchestra programming. Notably in April 2011, the orchestra made its Disney Hall début playing "A Celebration of World Music," in which the orchestra presented symphonic works influenced by Latin jazz, Arabic and Chinese classical musics, and shared the stage with a mariachi band. The result was artistically interesting, though it did nothing—could do nothing—to interrogate the cultural structures embodied in a concert hall (even one that looks like a space ship).

RK: Ethnomusicology as a discipline has a long history of scholarship on "musicking" across cultures (Small 1998). Ethnomusicologists have written on musical appropriation (Apolloni 2014; Feld 1996; Meintjes 1990), archiving cultural materials (Seeger 1986, 1996), copyright (Chang 2009/10; Seeger 1992), performance (Saeji 2012; Shelemay 1996), and pedagogy (Bailey 2008; Fung 1995; Titon 1995). Ethnomusicologists making the music of cultural Others takes a starting point with Mantle Hood's "bi-musicality." This classic research method calls for the researcher to learn how to play or sing the music he or she studies, learning the music from the inside (Hood 1960). Incorporating this method, ethnomusicologists have long taught the music of cultural Others in academic institutions (Solís 2004). Despite a sizeable literature (the above citations are representative, not comprehensive), we surprisingly lack a substantive dialogue around the rights to teach and perform these musical traditions and the politics of representing these cultures through our pedagogy. Ted Solís's (2004) edited volume on world music ensembles approaches some of these questions, especially Ricardo Trimillos's (2004) essay in that volume. However, as a discipline, we appear to have taken for granted our permission to teach and perform music from other cultures. Do we have the right to do so?

ELG: I believe that we need to ask this question much more often, and that we need to ask it also in the general context of WCM performance. The importance of this question derives from the way it invites us to consider which cultures we consider "ours," which we consider Other, and why.

RK: American Indian music, perhaps more than others, has a connotation of being "off-limits." Many Indigenous communities consider songs to be the property of specific individuals, groups, or even whole communities. One cannot use, perform, or hear these songs without first acquiring permission. Obtaining these rights often necessitates an exchange of gift, such as tobacco, cloth, seeds, foodstuffs, or feathers. However, this kind of access and permission does not easily cover syncretic music or music that results from interactions between two or more cultures. Much of the repertoire from our concert, "Imagining the New World," fit into this latter category. European composers wrote certain pieces based on their direct or indirect interactions with Native musics. Native American composers wrote other pieces within clearly Christianized and Europeanized colonial contexts. Other pieces featured imagined Indigenous characters and have no connection to American Indian performance practice. We therefore could not seek permission for most pieces.

In an effort to ameliorate this situation and to undermine or offset the ethnocentric perspectives of the Europeans who composed or collected the repertoire on our concert, we invited Indigenous perspectives and peoples into the musical process. These collaborations occurred at different points during the project. Several members of the ensemble were themselves Indigenous and/or have relationships with Indigenous communities. A Palachicola elder helped me brainstorm certain repertoire for the concert. The primary form of Indigenous involvement in the project took the form of pronunciation coaching. In addition to the more typical English, Spanish, and French, the ensemble sang pieces in Guaraní, Nahuatl, Quechua, and Souriquois/Mi'kmaq. I was able to consult with a native speaker over Skype in creating a recording of Nahuatl pronunciation. Neither language coach for Guaraní and Quechua were native speakers, but both were scholars with long-time relationships with the Indigenous peoples who speak those languages. (Our language coaches for English, French, and Spanish were also native speakers.) We also consulted archival and field recordings of related Indigenous music. The Souriquois/Mi'kmaq piece presented a different challenge, discussed below.

Because much of the repertoire was of such a sensitive or problematic nature, we went with the "interpretive" strategy Elisabeth mentioned above, and gave a lot of weight to the program notes. We also tried to incorporate as many points of view into these notes as possible. The resulting texts present a rich series of

perspectives: our program note collaborators hailed from art history, ethnomusicology, linguistic anthropology, and musicology. All conduct professional research on Native topics, several are members of Indigenous communities, and/or most maintain close relationships with them.

These program notes do not shy away from presenting colonial history in all its aspects. Instead, they uncover positive and negative sides to European-Indigenous relations, historically and in the present day. For example, Tongva/Gabrielino art historian and San Gabriel Mission museum board member Yve Chavez writes on the "Alabado," a Spanish-language hymn widely used to convert natives in the seventeenth-century California missions. She speaks of the sense of heritage in continuing this song tradition to this day, while acknowledging the bitter aftertaste implicit in the song's history of forced conversion (Chavez 2015).

Musicologist Alejandro García Sudo touches on a similar topic in his notes on the "Bolivian Sonata Suite," a compilation that we made of movements from different sonatas by anonymous Indigenous composers. In their South American mission towns, Jesuits also used music as a tool of conversion, teaching Guaraní and other Native groups how to play, sing, and compose in European styles. Although lost when Spain expelled the Jesuits from South America in 1767, many compositions by Indigenous composers have resurfaced in archives across the continent. In the Chiquitos region of Bolivia, this music now brings tourists and participants to festivals devoted to this repertoire. Schoolchildren learn to play it at an early age; several have pursued further musical studies in prestigious schools around the world. Despite its fraught history, these compositions now form an essential part of Chiquitos heritage and livelihood (García Sudo 2015).

In addition to incorporating Native American perspectives and histories, we faced the very real problem of interpretation. Performing music with fraught histories opens the likelihood of discomfiting or offending the audience. Fear of this possibility can too easily result in musically uninteresting interpretations, when the performers attempt to "play it safe." Performances wherein respect rests on "normative" and "neutral" concert protocols—the "transparent" performer, silent audience, performers wearing only black and exhibiting little emotion—actually do a disservice to the repertoire and the people and histories behind it. Comfort does not necessarily equal respect; in cases of colonial histories and repertoire, we argue that the opposite is true.

ELG: As the Director of the EME, I have found myself increasingly perturbed by this question of comfort, with reference to the cultural differences created by the passage of time and by colonialism. Some of what early music ensembles perform can sound distinctly Other to ears steeped in the carefully constructed and policed normativities of WCM. Additionally, the cultures from which that music derives are themselves Other (Jeffery 1992): how many ensembles or audience members have direct experience of courtly life? Of life before capitalism or colonialism? How many actually speak the languages—Latin, Renaissance and Baroque Italian or French, for example—in which so much early music was written?

RK: As contemporary European and Euro-American early musicians, we take for granted our ability to perform the repertoire that falls under the heading of "early music." Perhaps we construct ourselves as part of the same lineages/cultures as the composers and original performers of these repertoires.

ELG: Yet alienating for many, even those who imagine themselves within this lineage, is the unthinking propagation of what I call "WCM concert protocol" as a norm for public presentations of early repertories. Ryan, you summarize it well: "the 'transparent' performer, silent audience, performers wearing only black and exhibiting little emotion." I will go further, and describe it as an anti-dialogic dynamic, presuming a reflective, physically passive "consumer" mentality in audience members, and a correspondingly control-oriented "producer" mentality in performers. This protocol has become as much a historic artifact as any of the strange old repertories and practices we dedicate our ensemble time to rediscovering and learning.

WCM concert protocol was not in regular use anywhere before about 1820. It owes its peculiar congeries of restrictions and liberties, exclusions and privileges, to the culture of early Romanticism in Western Europe, and to the early years of Western reification and commodification of professional musicking. It was efficiently concentrated and expressed in the modern conservatory system of WCM education, a system consolidated shortly after the French Revolution that persists to this day with remarkably little modification. Interestingly, the consolidation of WCM concert protocol occurred when the Spanish, French, and British colonial enterprises in the Americas were decisively coming apart through a series of native and criollo revolutions. At the same time, the British Empire in India was entering its heyday. The complexly coeval relations between the definitive establishment of WCM concert protocol and the radically shifting relations between Western Europe and its colonies is a compelling topic that scholars are only just beginning to explore (see, for example, Davies 2014).

Today, a great deal of expert, beautiful, and ingenious work on pre-1750 repertories goes on before silent, respectful, bourgeois audiences who listen with consuming, earnest, mid-19th-century ears. Or, just as likely, audiences who feel themselves unable to achieve this kind of listening: generations of undergraduate students have told me that the restrictive atmosphere in the concert hall itself, more than the music, keeps them away from WCM events, including early music.

RK: We interrogated standard concert protocol in our interpretation of Lully's "Recit de l'Europe" from his ballet *Flore* (1669). The piece features four singers portraying four continents: "l'Europe," "l'Asie," "l'Afrique," and "l'Amérique." L'Europe begins with a recitative; her companions then join her as a kind of back-up choir in singing about the importance of love. L'Europe can easily sing of the importance of love between nations when she holds the reins in colonial relationships; the involvement of the other continents, all of which housed European colonies, begins to read as coercive. Yet the music sounds typically exquisite, a little gem of French Baroque movement and declamation. We challenged ourselves to make it interesting, and to appreciate its beauty, while acknowledging its problematic nature.

We found a possible avenue of approach in humor. Rather than take the piece seriously, we made fun of it. We assigned the part of l'Europe to an excellent countertenor, a man who sings in his falsetto as a soprano or alto; women sang the other parts. This casting allowed us to present the colonial dynamic through gender categories. By assigning l'Europe to a countertenor, a voice type now usually heard as lacking some of the vocal authority of, for example, the more "normative" sopranos and basses, we poked fun at the ridiculousness of the piece. We were aided in our goal of humor by the music itself. Several moments of "Recit de l'Europe" are so saccharine sweet as to be campy. We hoped that combining campy music with a countertenor and other singers each wearing ostrich feather "crowns" would make hilarity inevitable.



Countertenor Patrick Bonczyk sings l'Europe in "Recit de l'Europe." Photo by Henry Lim.



Caption: Alto Morgan Woolsey and soprano Shuai Ren sing as l'Afrique and l'Asie, respectively, in "Recit de l'Europe." Photo by Henry Lim.

ELG: Discomfort became inevitable too. One of our singers went through a crisis about the possible implications of those ostrich feathers shortly before the performance. And the audience's laughter was insecure, tentative….

RK: In this situation, we were promoting discomfort specifically for the purposes of educating our audience. By including another piece, "Fôrets paisibles," the final number of Rameau's opéra-ballet *Les Indes galants*, in our concert, we wanted to trace the history that led to its composition. We began our "Rameau Suite" with a recording of a Shawnee Stomp Dance, exemplifying the type of performance Rameau witnessed in 1735. After aligning themselves with French interests in a bid for survival, several Mishigamaw elders from the Illini Confederacy traveled to Paris to sign a treaty with France. While there, they performed several pieces from their traditional repertoire. Taking certain features from the performance, most likely the rhythm and call and response pattern, Rameau first composed the harpsichord solo, "Les Sauvages" (1727). He later used the solo as the foundation for the orchestral and choral pieces, "Danse du grand Calumet de paix" and "Fôrets paisibles" in *Les Indes galantes* (Browner and Koons 2015; Savage 1983).

Our methods contrasted with a 2005 production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* by the Parisian ensemble Les Arts Florissants (Rameau 2005), which exemplifies an extreme approach we decided to avoid. Their interpretation of "Fôrets paisibles" features dancers wearing buffalo heads cavorting behind singers dressed in pseudo-Plains fringed buckskins. The soprano soloist wears a war bonnet, and both she and the baritone soloist engage in stylized arm motions vaguely reminiscent of the chicken dance and, later, of ancient Egyptian art ("Les Indes galantes, Les Sauvages"). We showed a portion of this piece to several EME members who were horrified at the treatment of Indigenous cultures.

ELG: That production was designed by Blanca Li, a Spanish choreographer living in Paris; clips from it may be found on YouTube ("Les Indes galantes, Les Sauvages"). Li's work has a comic edge, and I think that this

choreography may have been an ironic response to the lyrics of "Fôrets paisibles," which, like "Récit de l'Europe," praise the idyllic peacefulness of savage life, etc.

RK: Where we staged the compositional process as it traveled from the American Indian to the European context in our "Rameau Suite," Les Arts Florissants staged a spectacle. While YouTube viewer responses are scarcely a scientific measure of anything, it is interesting that many viewers of the Arts Florissants production on YouTube communicated delight in the production, including UCLA Choctaw ethnomusicologist Tara Browner, one of our program note authors (Koons and Browner 2015). Although she noted the high camp nature of the production and expressed her enjoyment of the interpretation, other YouTube commentators articulated their shock at and disappointment in the production.

ELG: I suppose an argument can always be made for campiness. But irony or camp directed toward Others—not to mention oppressed Others—will always have something of the cheap shot about it, no?

RK: Out of all our repertoire, "Membertou's Song" presented unique difficulties. In 1606/07, the Frenchman Marc Lescarbot witnessed and later wrote about and transcribed three songs sung by the Souriquois chief and shaman, Membertou, in present-day Nova Scotia, Canada. Thirty years later, the missionary Gabriel Sagard-Théodat published a four-voice arrangement of Lescarbot's transcription (Bloechl 2005). As the first transcription and arrangement of Native American songs by Europeans, the pieces have great historical significance (Levine 2002). However, the circumstances of the music required us essentially to invent a performance practice.

More a curio or museum piece, "Membertou's Song" lacks a performance history. Lescarbot wrote his transcription in solfège notation. While it accurately portrays pitch values, solfège provides no information whatever about rhythmic values. Language was an additional quandary. The Souriquois were the ancestors of modern-day Mi'kmaq peoples. Although clear linguistic connections link the two, we could not easily ascertain correct pronunciation, nor was I successful in my attempts to contact several Mi'kmaq speakers and linguists. It seems likely that the songs Membertou sang and Lescarbot transcribed were part of a healing and/or ritualistic event (Spinney 2006:66). As such, it would be remarkably inappropriate for us even to attempt to "re-create" them, even if that were possible. The multiple historical lenses through which the pieces filtered before reaching us place "Membertou's Song" somewhere between Indigenous and European cultures. The piece might better be considered an imagining of what Membertou sang.

These circumstances suggested a European art song-style performance rather than a "re-creation" of something Indigenous. We treated Lescarbot's original transcription as a kind of incipit, singing each syllable as a distinct quarter note. Our pronunciation reflected the French orthography. We sang Sagard-Théodat's arrangement as though it were art music, following the melodic rise and fall of the soprano line for dynamic interpretation. The piece also features a number of falling shouts, cries, or glissandi. Lescarbot writes, "This song being ended, they all shouted He-e-e-e" (Sagard-Théodat 1896-1901:291-292). As with the performance practices of other Woodland American Indian cultures, this shout ends all three songs and functions not unlike a coda. The ensemble worked for a long time to create heterophonic shouts not unlike those I have witnessed during my fieldwork with Palachicola, a distantly-related Woodlands group. Our invented performance practice allowed us to present the piece in concert. However, the piece lies at so many removes from the original as to derive from another world.

ELG: I find it provocative to think about the "other worlds" that arise through attempts to represent Otherness. They are neither temporally here nor there, but a third element. Morally speaking, they problematically lack the license of fiction to tell untrue things in order to construct a higher truth. What we were forced to construct in this concert became at best a shaky mirror that reveals our own habits of thought. The shakiness and discomfort attending that mirror are difficult things to deal with in the context of a formal concert, especially because concerts require that we subsume everything under the imperative of "being convincing."

RK: In her analysis of cultural ownership, law scholar Susan Scafidi (2005) distinguishes between appreciation and appropriation. She notes that cultural borrowing, if conducted with permission, can be beneficial to both the source community and the borrower. However, appropriation damages a community more often than it helps.

Scafidi draws out a number of instances of misappropriation, many of them case studies involving Indigenous peoples. For example, in 1984, a photographer for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper photographed a private Pueblo of Santo Domingo ceremonial dance from the vantage of a low-flying plane. In addition to trespass, violation of the Pueblo's ban on photography, and invasion of privacy, this act represented a worst-case scenario of cultural appropriation, wherein the external use or copying of a cultural product harms or

destroys the intangible aspects of the original (Scafidi 2005:103). As with most American Indian sacred repertoires, outsider access—especially uninformed outsider access—may weaken or destroy the meanings of the event. Over the course of my field research on Indigenous ceremonial music, I have often heard access to ceremonial activities by uninformed outsiders compared with children unknowingly sticking their fingers into electrical sockets and getting shocked or worse. In addition to the spiritual repercussions, music can provide an important means by which Indigenous peoples constitute and mobilize their identities; inappropriate use of that music consequently endangers their identities and senses of self (Stokes 1994).

The situation surrounding the original transcription of "Membertou's Song" relates to the experience of the Santo Domingo Pueblo. Most likely, Lescarbot heard something he was not meant to hear, wrote down something he ought not to have, and negatively affected the original as a result. Where does the EME performance lie in relation to this history, especially given what we know and/or can assume of the original circumstances? Although a delicate situation, our choices to move into an art music interpretation, use French pronunciation, and realize what can only be a half-accurate transcription due to the lack of rhythmic detail may sufficiently alter the circumstances. Perusal of field recordings and the applicable literature suggests that "Membertou's Song" as we performed it differs significantly from contemporary Mi'kmaq performance practice and song form (Tulk 2009). Because the song cannot but differ heavily from the original circumstances, we deemed it safe enough to perform our interpretation of the song.

The power dynamics surrounding "Imagining the New World" placed us as directors, and the EME more generally, in the position of power. As the directors of the ensemble and the concert, and the performers of the music, we had the power to decide how the music sounded. Without exception, the people whose compositions we performed are now deceased.

ELG: Yes, the cultures from which we borrow are completely at our mercy; the people involved cannot express any opinion whatever of what we say about them, how we represent them. Simply by their irrevocable pastness, they are excluded from our efforts and silenced as effectively as if we had colonized them. Does the non-reciprocity of this power dynamic mean that we are *necessarily* appropriating from the past? Is there any moral wiggle room? Indeed, many post-colonial theorists suggest that "history-making" is another type of colonial relationship (See for example Ahmad 2004; Foucault 1984).

RK: By performing a concert where most of the repertoire derives from heavily appropriated histories and misrepresentations, we and the EME might easily be accused of appropriation. However, descendents of many of those involved in the original composition and performance of these repertoires are alive today. These descendents include both the European/Euro-American and the Indigenous heirs. We attempted to ameliorate the power dynamics of the situation by inviting members of those descendent groups into the process of preparing, performing, and curating the concert. While we did not have the temporal or financial resources to redistribute the power dynamics as much as we wanted to, we succeeded in greatly improving them. We performed music that rarely receives play time, and we made substantial efforts to incorporate the multivalent stories, perspectives, and histories tangled in the music into our performance. We attempted to create a space for conversation, dialogue, and education around these issues. These issues are uncomfortable. No matter where one stands, no matter how intimate or distant one's connection to histories of colonialism, we find it discomfiting and often painful. But, as novelist Dorothy Sayers has asked, "is your or my comfort of a very great importance?" ([1936] 2012:365).

Some Wish Lists

RK: We could have done more. Seven weeks is a remarkably short time in which to implement an ethical and musically compelling concert of this nature. There were several instances where time forced us to focus on musical and interpretational aspects over ethics. In an ideal world, several parts of our preparation would have differed. Collaborating with Indigenous native speakers and musical practitioners would ideally have involved more than several conversations and the creation of pronunciation recordings. Instead, we would have liked to invite tradition bearers into the rehearsal space to present on and lead the students in making music of contemporary Indigenous source communities. While we succeeded in raising awareness in the ensemble about some of the politics and ethics behind the music, we would have liked to foster additional conversations with more Indigenous peoples themselves.

Although not strictly in the purview of the EME, this program would ideally have taken place as part of a seminar-ensemble combination. For example, Elisabeth and I together and/or with other UCLA faculty might have designed a seminar probing the histories and issues enfolded into the repertoire. This added venue would have

created the space for dialogues that interrogated the repertoire and would have given us the ability to devote more of the rehearsal time to making music. Rather than essentially trying to do two things at once, this structure would have allowed for greater depth and breadth on the material.

ELG: I wish that in presenting "Imagining the New World" we had had time and resources to explore other, more dialogic relations with our audience. I would like to know what might have happened had we gotten that audience off its collective butt, deliberately erased the proscenium, and obliged them to participate physically and sonically in what we were doing. The models for that participation might have been to some degree derived from Indigenous practices (the circle or line dance, call-and-response…). The very real discomfort that such experiments would undoubtedly have produced would have had a special, and especially useful, edge to it in the context of the discomfort that we were actively exploring.

We did graze the "edge" of that discomfort when we invited the audience to sing the "Alabado" with us. Though not many sang (that I could see or hear), we momentarily managed to rupture the WCM concert-protocol dynamic. I experienced this moment, which occurred at the beginning of the second half of the program, as a decisive one in the success of the concert; after it, we began to feel that we had the audience "on our side." Before, throughout the first half, they were slow and hesitant to clap at the end of pieces. Since applause is one of the few forms of audience participation that WCM concert protocol allows, Ryan and I had begun to worry that they were offended.

They seemed not to be, at least, not by the end. In a moment unlike any I have experienced in forty years of giving WCM concerts, after the final applause had died down and the audience had begun to disperse, some people in the front rows re-initiated applause so vociferously that they got the entire crowd clapping again; we had to race back out to take another, happily disorganized collective bow. What if we could have harnessed that most unusual, vivid, "outside-the-frame" energy? That is what I would like to do with EME concerts in general; this one pointed the way with unusual clarity.

At this point I want to invite briefly another person into our dialogue: the peer reviewer who read and commented on this essay, Professor Chris Goertzen (CG). He was not present at the concert, but he raised some excellent concerns.

CG: Might presenting fewer pieces have led to a more successful presentation of complexities? (…) By trying to do so much in one session, did you undercut your aims?

RK: While we could have done more, we could also have done less. In an attempt to represent a wide range of repertoire, we very likely overwhelmed our audience. A more easily consumable concert from the audience's perspective might have focused on any single category of the repertoires we included. Perhaps the Indigenous-European music of just North America or just South America, of just one region, or just first compositions and publications in the New World. Focusing our lens more tightly might have necessitated fewer program notes, less interpretation, and more depth of understanding. However, audience response overall suggested our success in communicating our aims and music.

ELG: I am trying to think of an adventurous, original concert, conference, or seminar that didn't in some way try to bite off far more than it could chew. Overdoing it seems like a permanent liability in any academic enterprise. Maybe the most interesting way to address Professor Goertzen's observations, which I think are on point, would be to ask Ryan how he might design a "lite" version of this concert if the opportunity arose.

RK: A "lite" concert! While I think I find the concept rather charming in the abstract, I am firmly of the opinion that the issues we addressed in this concert ought not be presented "lite." Conceptualizing these issues—addressing colonialism, ethnocentrism, appropriation, and empowering and publicizing Indigenous peoples and voices—lightly is dangerous and has resulted in the continual ignorance of and disregard for Native peoples, their histories, and perspectives (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Much of the poignancy and power of "Imagining the New World" derived from the diversity of material we covered. Colonization and its continued aftereffects did not occur only in one isolated place in the Americas, but throughout the Western Hemisphere and beyond. Performing repertoire from across colonized Indigenous America and colonial Europe brought that concept home to our audience. Colonization was and is an overwhelming reality and I think attempting a "lite" concert around the topic actually does a disservice to those involved: colonized peoples, their histories, the repertoire, the performers, and the audience. Presenting colonialism "lite" strays too close to revisionist history, perhaps not unlike the move of a recently published US history textbook that refers to African slave populations as "workers," suggesting that slaves were merely economic

migrants (Dart 2015).

CG: Might it be a good idea to insert a piece or two entailing these sorts of controversy into (somewhat) more conventional early music programs in the future? I am responsible for the music history sequence where I work. I recently introduced the topic of madrigals, and explored how scatological many of the texts are, and thus why we ought to be encouraging audiences at least to snicker when these are sung. That probably worked for a few students, but I suspect that once again I will have just convinced many of them that I have a nasty mind. And this was presenting two short pieces of music in a 50-minute session, employing a format where lots of explanation is expected.

ELG: I know exactly the sort of situation you are describing here—undergraduates can be so startlingly prudish! Yet I am not sure I agree with this proposed solution, for several reasons. I think that the uncontested, Eurocentric repertory on such a hypothetical concert would inevitably emerge as normative and pretty thoroughly undercut the project of promoting "creative discomfort."

RK: I have actually witnessed this undercutting firsthand. Several years ago I sang "Membertou's Song" in a concert of francophone repertoires. Although the accompanying spoken program notes attempted to address the history of the piece and discomfit the audience, any "creative discomfort" got lost as soon as we began singing the typically French baroque song that followed. Having experienced that undercut goal, I was determined not to lose such a potentially moving moment in "Imagining the New World."

ELG: Any truly new information or perspective is going to be overwhelming to us; no matter how necessary or overdue, if it is unfamiliar, we probably cannot assimilate it all at once. Rejection or just shutting down mentally/emotionally are very common reactions to this kind of overwhelm. But weeks or even months later, we may find ourselves thinking differently about those same matters. We may even imagine we "discovered" this new information or perspective for ourselves; my former cello teacher William Pleeth used to call this kind of pedagogy "planting depth charges."

RK: In preparing this concert, we chose to balance respect for Indigenous perspectives with education about the music, tackling the issues the music raised rather than ignoring them or "playing it safe." Our efforts did not necessarily absolve us from the accusation of cultural appropriation, but promoted understanding of and respect for the repertoire on the part of the audience and the ensemble. If we have been able to promote greater understanding and positive change, the project has been worthwhile.

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