11-2018

Cultural Appropriation in Classical Music: Annotated Bibliography

University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/muscilology_student

Part of the Musicology Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.
Cultural Appropriation in Classical Music: Annotated Bibliography


Andrews speaks on how to fix a history of appropriation. Much of classical repertoire comes from past, made in a time when the population had different sensibilities. It is unfair to hold the past to modern sensibilities. Though modern performances of these works can be slightly changed to combat this history of appropriation. Andrews analysis Teresa Berganza contribution in changing the role to adhere to a better cultural context.


Michael Birnbaum examine the appropriation of Yiddish music by German musicians. Due to the resent popularity Yiddish music in Germany the question of appropriation has arose. This article goes into a historical background of Yiddish music and given the two cultures history how the appropriation of this music could be an issue. This source further expand why culture appropriation is an issue and should be talked about.

Browns explores cultural apportion through the analysis of Louis Armstrong and Bing Crosby’s singing style. Brown discuss the historical background and how that affects issue of appropriation. Also determines that they both used elements of each other’s singing style. This source shows the positives of appropriation, in that it helps to progress Cho, Ryan. "Cultural Appropriation and Choral Music: A Conversation That Can Make Both Our Music and Community Better." The Choral Journal 55, no. 10 (2015): 59-63.

Cho speaks on the choral community and it need to adapt and expand its musical repertoire. This in many cases means expanding into non-western music. Cho discuss the issue with appropriating music from other cultures and the nectary steps to take to not cause offense to one’s culture.


This article opens up a larger discussion about non-western music’s place in the western influenced world music market. It follows many prominent western artists collaborating or using non-western artist and musical materials. This article unlike others seeks to understand why expositing non-western cultures is so popular in the music market.


In this article Arthur Groos focuses on Puccini and his composition Madama Butterfly. It determines what aspects of Puccini’s appropriation of Japanese culture are questionable. This includes music, staging, casting and all other duties that come with creating an opera.

Lovesey follow the 1960s string group The Incredible Sting Band through musical journey. This group through their history has appropriated many cultural groups. Unlike many other examples of appropriation. The ISB did it out of passion for the music. Even if their approaches were not authentic to the music culture they brought attention to new musical styles around the world.


The focus of this article is the Puerto Rican national identity. By comparison the source speaks the lease about the negatives of appropriation. It discusses the appropriation of Cuban musical elements into Puerto Rican music. This source provides a great example of a natural appropriation of cultural elements into another.


Stevens provides a unique prospective in this article because he is a composer. He talks on what he has personally seen in his work community and a broader view of appropriation. The article is very organized with many different subtopics on appropriation. This source provides a great account of cultural appropriation in practice.

Armstrong focus on Disney’s “Moana”. The movie is based on a Polynesian identity and so of course is the music. In an attempt to be authentic Disney hired an abundance of Polynesian musicians and composers. Yet Armstrong argues how Disney arranges this music and uses in context of the film causes misuse of appropriation. This is a great modern example of cultural appropriation and marketing can play a big role in how a work is perceived.


Schaefer and Philip discus Paul Bowel a famous Hollywood composer of the early 20th century. The article focuses on his compositions and the cultures that were appropriated. Bowel is unique in the fact that he appropriated North African culture before and after he had lived. This article provides perspective of multiple cases of appropriation by one composer and it changed as his knowledge of a culture grew.


This article does not focus on the appropriation of a single culture. Instead it seeks to define the general notion of cultural appropriation. James Young uses this idea of “profound offense” to determine what acts of appropriation should be deemed immoral. This is a great reference to define cultural appropriation and determine what musical works immorally appropriating a culture.