

Comparative Philology, French Music, and the Composition of Indo-Europeanism from Fétis to Messiaen

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the disciplines of comparative philology and linguistics exerted significant force on the priorities and techniques of musicologists and composers in *fin-de-siècle* France, and examines how ideologies of Indo-Europeanism (or aryanism), concomitant with comparative philology, generated efforts to ‘sound out’ Indo-Europeanism in music. Using a relational approach, dense interdisciplinary networks of philologists/linguists, musicologists, and composers are reconstructed to demonstrate how musicological appropriations of linguistic research reverberated in musical composition right through the 1950s. These contexts reveal how wide-ranging repertoires emerged from ethnic-nationalist projects of reclaiming Indo-European ‘patrimony’.

Following a general introduction, the thesis is divided into two Parts. Part I, ‘*Philologie comparée, musicologie, and Indo-European Hypotheses*’, is organised around four overlapping intellectual networks comprising comparative philologists and musicologists and spanning the *fin-de-siècle*. Francophone musicologists’ efforts to model their discipline on that of comparative philology are surveyed, and arguments concerning the place of music between concepts of ‘language’ and ‘race’ are retraced, with special attention paid to musicologists’ efforts to pinpoint quasi-morphological ‘Indo-European’ musical structures – in particular, ‘modes’ and ‘metres’ – construed as ‘essential’ and ‘ancestral’. A short introduction charts the narrative arc and theoretical devices structuring Part I as a whole, and sketches a prehistory of Indo-Europeanist philological thinking – specifically about music – in the writing of William Jones. In the subsequent chapters, I chart a roughly chronological course led by philologists and trailed by musicologists. Chapter 1 compares how François-Joseph Fétis and François-Auguste Gevaert respectively found exciting prospects and sobering limitations in the potential for comparativist methods to help establish music history. Chapter 2 traces how Louis-Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray, professor of music history at the Paris Conservatoire, developed an aryanist theory of music history in consultation with philologist Émile-Louis Burnouf, and propagated it in Parisian scholarly and musical circles; Burnouf’s own little-known contributions to musicology, encouraged by Bourgault-Ducoudray, are then examined. Chapter 3 explores how linguists were involved in shaping musicological techniques at the time of musicology’s disciplinary institutionalisation. The second half of the chapter focuses on linguist Antoine Meillet’s relationship with musicologists Pierre Aubry and Maurice Emmanuel. Over these three chapters, a loose trajectory is established: initially, racial-essentialist notions of Indo-Europeanism are presumed generative of language and culture, with music as a corollary; musical parameters like ‘mode’ and ‘metre’ are considered analogous to linguistic categories such as morphological roots and inflections. Later, as constructions of ‘race’ are dissociated from language, scholars reconceive of Indo-Europeanism as

linguistic-essentialist, and attempt to pinpoint a metonymic relationship between phonological stress/accent and poetic/musical metre. Finally, Chapter 4 examines the musicological scholarship of Lyonnais Sanskritist Joanny Grosset, author most notably of the substantial chapter on Indian music in the *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire* published in 1913. The thematic relevance and central musical importance of Grosset's work warrants its inclusion alone, but Grosset, as a relative outsider, additionally provides an instructive contrast with respect to the networks charted in the first three chapters.

In Part II, 'Composing with Philology: Performances of Authenticity and Innovation', I trace how the intellectual networks elaborated in Part I infiltrated compositional practices, especially through the reification and appropriation of musical 'modality'; throughout, I examine paratextual evidence alongside musical analysis to show how composers legitimated experimentalism through 'performances' of philological 'authenticity'. Chapter 5 returns to Bourgault-Ducoudray, beginning with his arrangements of Greek folksongs and proceeding to original compositions including his opera, *Thamara*. With attention to both compositional techniques and rhetorical strategies, I show how he put music-historical theories of modal inheritance into creative practice, justifying them with scholarly authority, and presenting the results as an alternative to 'chromaticism', increasingly framed as Germanic. Chapter 6 follows Bourgault's modal devices and discursive tactics as they are adopted by other composers, including Bruneau and Saint-Saëns, to various ends. Chapter 7 focuses on the specific case of borrowings from 'Indian' music, with an emphasis on 'modes'; early on, composers implement, and 'perform' through paratextual labels, notions of Indian modality as a device to complement programmatic representation; over time, and through the intervention of philological methods, these modal techniques are increasingly used in abstract contexts, in conjunction with classical French musical forms, improvisation, and pedagogy. While many of the works discussed in these three chapters have remained on the margins of French music historiography, I demonstrate that the reception of these compositions among composers and pedagogues is often outsized compared to their public or critical profile, so that they form an important lineage which has not been accounted for in previous scholarship. Finally, the entirety of Chapter 8 is devoted to the case of Olivier Messiaen's engagement with early Indian metres. Reflecting the musicological pivot from 'Indo-European modes' to 'metres' in the early twentieth century, I survey Messiaen's experimentation with *deśītālas*, thirteenth-century rhythms sourced in Grosset's chapter, and show how this interest was prompted by attempts by Meillet and Emmanuel to deduce structural principles of proto-Indo-European accent and metre which were discussed in Chapter 3. Turning to newly available manuscript materials, I detail how Messiaen derived principles for organising durations 'additively' from his study of the *deśītālas* over the 1930s and early 1940s, observing Messiaen's careful silence regarding his techniques during this period. Finally, combining sketch study with musical analysis, I show how philological techniques mediate Messiaen's appropriation of the *deśītālas*, leading them to degenerate into increasingly abstract rhythmic series that culminate in the rationalism of the end of the decade. From his

borrowings of early Indian metres (*deśitālas*) through his hyperformalist ‘Mode de valeurs et d’intensités’, the development of Messiaen’s rhythmic style is radically reinterpreted as a logical extension of francophone musicology’s disciplinary and epistemological inheritance from comparative philology.