

CALL FOR PAPERS

**THE GLOBAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MARKET: MAKING,  
TRADING AND COLLECTING IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE  
EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

Symposium

Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris

November 2024, 18

*Centre d'histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines (Université Paris-Saclay), Équipe  
Conservation et Recherche du Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris, Centre de Recherche  
sur la Conservation (UAR 3224)*

While musical instruments have traveled since Antiquity, fostering the evolution of musical practices and aesthetics in various latitudes, the Industrial Revolution and European colonization gave new impetus to exchanges in the nineteenth century. The rise of trade routes and steam navigation hastened the globalization of markets of the raw materials used in making instruments, which became an industrialized, mass-production process. European instruments won new markets in the Americas early in the century, followed by Asia, Africa and Oceania in the wake of colonization. International sales of English and French pianos began skyrocketing in the 1830s, reaping high profits and leading to the design of specific models, such as Pleyel's "tropicalized piano". The accordion took markets in America by storm in the wake of mass immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also in Africa, the Indian Ocean and Polynesia, while the saxophone conquered the New World.

At the same time, instruments presented as "exotic" and "savage" enriched European public and private collections, especially in the museums that were being created across the continent from Paris to Berlin. Exhibited and silenced, these instruments, usually acquired in a colonial context, are early examples of artification. Some entered the African or Asian art market at the expense of being heavily modified. Others were used as props on the sets of orientalist operas, such as *Lakmé*, which premiered at the Paris Opera in 1883, or joined the collections of instrument-makers such as Adolphe Sax and Victor-Charles Mahillon, who drew inspiration from them for their research. In addition to their aesthetic dimension, instruments served a Darwinian project based on a view of non-European cultures as primitive and participated in the construction of racialized colonial cultures in the imperial powers, colonies and dominions, but also in the Americas' new independent States, where the European powers exerted cultural imperialism.

Musical instruments stood at the crossroads of several globalized markets on which Europe rose to dominance in the nineteenth century: the materials (precious woods, ivory, mother-of-pearl, etc.) used to make them; "ethnographic" objects acquired in Africa, the Americas, Asia or Oceania through unequal trade or under duress; manufactured goods (instruments made in Europe and,

later, the United States and exported to the rest of the world); African and Asian art; and travel souvenirs.

The symposium will explore the global musical instrument market's various facets from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. The joint study of markets and collections, which grew in parallel and fed off each other during the period, aims to map the flows of instruments, the places and the players who put them into circulation from the perspective of a global history of music and material cultures. Upstream, the goal is to explore the provenance of the materials used in making instruments. Downstream, the reflection will focus on acquisition methods in the colonial context, instrument-makers' sales strategies (Europeans or non-Europeans meeting European demand), the role of world's fairs and colonial exhibitions, the social uses of instruments and the representations associated with them.

While musicologists and historians have so far focused little attention on purchasing and export data, this information sheds new light on the history of European musical instruments, until now mainly considered from the organological point of view, such as those in collections of non-European cultural property, a subject of recent research in the framework of provenance research and restitution policies. The discussions will also highlight the dynamics of musical globalization even before the invention of sound recording. Like artists, sheet music and concert halls, musical instruments have been powerful vectors of cultural exchanges while serving the colonial project and manufacturing musical "otherness".

The papers will focus on:

- The materials market: growth, trajectories and developments in the colonial context (precious woods, ivory, etc.)
- Non-European collections of instrument museums (origins, acquisition methods, classification systems, etc.)
- Private collections of non-European instruments (particularly those of musicians, instrument-makers, musicologists, etc.)
- Musical instruments in universal and colonial exhibitions
- The art market and the artification of non-European musical instruments
- Exports of European instruments to the rest of the world: instrument-makers' sales strategies, types of instruments, competition for markets (first between European instrument-makers, then between American, European and Asian instrument-makers), etc.
- Representations and discourses associated with instruments from elsewhere: symbols of civilization and social status or, conversely, primitiveness, reproduction of gender norms, purveyors of exoticism, etc.

**Scientific committee:** Anaïs Fléchet (Paris-Saclay, CHCSC), Alexandre Girard-Muscağorry (Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris), Giovanni Giurarti (Sapienza Università di Roma), Anne Lafont (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, CRAL), Thierry Maniguet (Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris), Marie-Pauline Martin (Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris), Gabriele Rossi Rognoni (Royal College of Music), Léa Saint-Raymond (Ecole normale

supérieure, PSL), Ariane Théveniaud (Paris-Saclay, CHCSC), Saskia Willaert (musée des Instruments de musique de Bruxelles)

**Organizing committee:** Anaïs Fléchet (Paris-Saclay, CHCSC), Alexandre Girard-Muscagorry (Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris), Ariane Théveniaud (Paris-Saclay, CHCSC), Thierry Maniguet (Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris)

**The paper proposals (300 words maximum), an abridged summary (150 words maximum) and a presentation of the author (150 words maximum) must be submitted by March 31** to the following addresses: [anais.flechet@uvsq.fr](mailto:anais.flechet@uvsq.fr); [agirard@cite-musique.fr](mailto:agirard@cite-musique.fr); [atheveniaud@cite-musique.fr](mailto:atheveniaud@cite-musique.fr)

The languages of the symposium are French and English.

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