Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Steffen Just

# Music and Human Rights Since World War II

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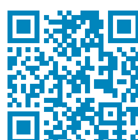

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# Music and Human Rights Since World War II

Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Steffen Just


## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intersections of music and human rights since World War II on a global level. It presents ideas and suggests possible pathways to study the articulation of human rights politics through sound and musical practices. While historians have investigated human rights through various perspectives pertaining to aspects of law, society, and cultural politics, the manifestation and expression of human rights issues in sound aesthetics are still waiting to be discovered. Musicologists and sound researchers, on the other hand, have closely studied the symbolic and affective use of music and sound by social movements, cultural institutions, liberal governments, authoritarian regimes, and individual activists, but the theme of human rights has only surfaced explicitly in a handful of publications. This paper, therefore, suggests that an interdisciplinary analysis, which combines theories and methods from historiography, music, and sound scholarship, makes it possible to address global human rights history in novel ways.


## 1 CELEBRATING THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH MUSIC[1,2]

On 10 December 1949, the United Nations (UN) organised a concert dedicated to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that had been adopted the year prior under the title "Resolution 217" by the General Assembly at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. Designed to celebrate the first anniversary of the UDHR, the event was a splendid affair, held in New York's Carnegie Hall and staffed by a *melée* of international celebrities straight out of a Who's Who in film, music, and politics. Leonard Bernstein directed the Boston Symphony playing Dmitri Shostakovich's "March of the Nations" and Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy". The former president's wife and then United States (US) delegate to the UN, Eleanor Roosevelt and the UN General Secretary, Trygve Lie, appeared on stage hailing the Declaration, as did the renowned British actor Sir Lawrence Olivier, who read the preamble of the Declaration, arriving fresh from a production of Jean Anouilh's Antigone at the New Theatre in London.

The event was broadcast internationally, and it was, by all accounts, a splendid success. Most importantly, it was not a one-time gig. For the next 32 years, the UN would mount a concert in honour of the UDHR nearly every year. And almost every single year, the protocol section managed to invite high-level celebrities to read, sing, and perform the UDHR: conductors such as Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and the controversial Wilhelm Furtwängler, actors such as Gregory Peck and Lauren Bacall, orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic.

About a decade into this newly crafted tradition, the set-up of the concerts changed dramatically. In 1961, for the first time, the all-classical canon was abandoned in favour of a contribution inspired by South Asia. The programme that day featured an "Introduction to Indian Dances" performed in the General Assembly, which is not exactly a concert hall. In 1962, a group of Nigerian

1 Note: Musical examples provided in the text can be activated by clicking on the respective link.

2 Many thanks to Ian Giacondo for commenting on and proofreading this paper. A hearty note of thanks for reading earlier drafts to Rebekah Ahrendt (U. Utrecht, NL), Gertud Pickhan (FU Berlin, GER), Rashida Braggs (Williams College, USA), Esteban Buch (EHESS, Paris, FR), Nicholas Cull (USC, USA), Ernesto Donas (U. República, Montevideo, UY), Anaïs Fléchet (U. Versailles, FR), Danielle Fosler-Lussier (Ohio State U, Columbus), Philippe Gumplowicz (U. Évry-Val d'Essonne-Paris Saclay, FR), James Loeffler (U. Virginia, USA), Samuel Moyn (Yale U., USA), Marcos Napolitano (U. São Paulo, BR), Violeta Nigrita de Gunta (Paris EHESS, FR / U. National de Quilmes, ARG), Ronald Radano (U. Wisconsin, USA), Anne Shreffler (Har-vard U., USA), Tanja Börzel & Michael Zürn (SCRIPTS FU Berlin, GER). Thank you to the SCRIPTS Cluster of Excellence for funding this paper.

dancers took to the stage, as did pianist Jose Iturbi, hailing from Spain under dictator Franco. In 1963, the programme featured "The African Scene: Five Songs and Dances", performed by Ivan Annan and Franz Tagoe with Rashida Abu-Bakr, Edith Grootboor, Hamza-Al-Deen, Francis Nyarko Cann, and Eva Kiritta. In 1964, The "Frats Quintet" performed "Folk Songs of Jamaica".

This diversification went on for more than a decade into the 1970s. And while the available records do not indicate any one specific reasoning, it is highly plausible that the recorded transformation took place due to the intervention of actors and participants outside of Western liberal states – within and outside of the assembly. The papers of the protocol section of the UN archives in New York City do not yield any information on the motivation behind the shift. However, the files of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and the UN Human Rights Council in New York, Paris, and Geneva appear to be more vocal on this point.

More importantly, the story does not end there. In the late 1970s, this diversity subsided, and in the early 1980s, UDHR programmes vanished altogether. There were attempts to resuscitate the venture in the 1990s, but these efforts were, for the most part, "classical", very much along the lines of what these concerts once had been in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1998, Luciano Pavarotti sang his heart out at the 50th anniversary of the UDHR. Since 2008, Daniel Barenboim has twice sought to mount UDHR anniversary concerts at the UN in Geneva (Gienow-Hecht 2023a).

How do we make sense of this story in the context of human rights, music, and international relations? What does it mean that programmes and actors changed so radically and overnight, back and forth, over the course of more than thirty years? This essay aims to outline a framework for a more in-depth examination of the sounds of human rights, both targeted at this specific case study as well as for the study of sound and rights in general. More specifically, we suggest an avenue of research to expand the focus from verbal to nonverbal and from the sociopolitical to the aesthetic dimension of human rights activism.

## 2 THE SOUNDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

On a general level, the story outlined in the UDHR case raises the question of what human rights may sound like. Is there a sound of human rights? To what extent can we reconstruct its history through music? Do sounds have something to tell us about sociopolitical momenta, orders, and developments? Can we "hear" human rights history, political and otherwise? Curiously, both social scientists and scholars from the field of music have been notoriously reluctant to address these questions in tandem. Indeed, not much seems to have changed since Jeffrey Jackson and Stanley Pelkey opened their 2005 collection, Music and History: Bridging the Disciplines, asking, "Why haven't historians and musicologists been talking to one another?" At the time, the two authors offered a simple diagnosis: a problem of communication, notably in regard to specific methods, knowledge, and skills prevalent in both disciplines. Historians, for instance, seemed to believe that one needed to be able to read, play or even like music to make sense of it historically.

Taking Jackson and Pelkey as a point of departure, this paper seeks to formulate answers to the general questions that emerge from our examination of the UDHR case, considering the transdisciplinary collaboration between musical and historical scholarship. The aim is to locate novel epistemological and methodological avenues by inviting research on music into an intimate dialogue with history by looking at the history of human rights, an exceptionally polysemic concept and, ideally, one that has been highly influential

since the Second World War around the entire globe. Thus, human rights may serve as a topic from which to tackle these general questions through a more specific focus: why, where, how, and by whom were issues of human rights transregionally articulated, distributed, and challenged through musical means and sound across genres and regions over the course of the second half of the twentieth century? The paper builds on the central hypothesis that music, regardless of genre, is an active force that not only reflects but shapes sociopolitical structures. It suggests that the history of human rights can be examined through a combination of different epistemological frameworks and methods from history, musicology, and sound studies, taking the interdependencies between sociopolitical structures and music seriously. To this end, this essay proposes a transdisciplinary framework that includes archival research, oral history interviews, and music/sound analysis. This constellation of different epistemologies and methods accounts for the multifaceted and entangled history of music and human rights, transregionally and across diverse genres.

The essay thus highlights the need to reconstruct political history through music and crafts a roadmap of how to do this. The first section shows that historians still largely underestimate and neglect music's role in the history of politics and, accordingly, human rights. Research perspectives from musicology and sound studies can help ignite innovative research agendas and address things we otherwise do not see. The second section of the paper presents two "themes" which we deem fruitful for studying the global history of music and human rights. The first, "Stages and Actors", reflects on how to investigate places and people historically involved in the musical articulations of human rights through archival research. The second, "Aesthetics and Sound", introduces and elucidates methods for music analysis and applies them to human rights research.

Part three seeks to make sense of the UDHR case study based on the two proposed approaches. It shows how a combined analysis of stages and actors on the one hand and sound studies on the other highlights the complex negotiation process surrounding the definition and meaning of human rights – and the even more salient question of who will be in charge of shaping that definition. Put differently, the case of the UDHR concerts reveals that the proposed theoretical frameworks effectively serve as tools for investigating the political dimensions and potentials that are inscribed in or are connected to musical sounds. On a meta-level, studying political history through music and sound can initiate an innovative shift in epistemologies, introduce a new toolkit of methodological resources, and also engender unique ways to understand the inner workings of political power (see Kennerley 2021). Political power seen through this lens is exercised not only through governments, organisations, institutions, and human actors in general but also in sound insofar as music pertains to symbolic orders, feelings, affects, structures of subjectivity, shared (communal) social experiences, and interpersonal relationships.

## 3 MUSIC, POWER, AND POLITICS

Music has played a powerful and formative role in the history of human rights, yet it is often overlooked. Frequently cited in manifestations for the freedom of the arts, Article 22 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948, stipulated radically that every human being was entitled to "cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality". The reference to culture can be seen to include music. In the following decades, from the global circulation of classical music to British rock, US jazz and blues to Brazilian *musica tropicalismo* to South African *Mbaqanga*, music became attached to the production and distribution

mechanisms of the global entertainment industry (Onyebadi 2022). As such, it provided an influential cultural platform for the post-war world to articulate political vision in the name of human rights but also the exact opposite: a tool of suppression, torture, and extinction.

Since 1948, artists the world over have used music's appeal and "universalism" to lobby for justice, freedom, and human rights. Examples are heterogenous, ranging from Argentinian-Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim and Palestine-US American scholar Edward Saïd (Barenboim/Saïd 2003), founders of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 1999, through the Beninese-French singer Angélique Kidjo to US-American jazz performer Alicia Keys (cf. Dave 2015: 2ff.). In the realm of classical music, for example, the year of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Luigi Dallapiccola published "Il Prigioniero" (The Prisoner, 1948), a one-act opera that draws on ideas of torture and hope in a world that knows no justice. In 1960, Luigi Nono made a direct claim on the human rights situation with "Intolleranza" while Mikis Theodorakis composed "Canto General" (based on Pablo Neruda's poem) after he had been a victim of Greek state repression. In popular music, the list most notably comprises a series of transnational Amnesty International pop concerts in the 1980s, along with hundreds of soul, rock, folk, and hiphop artists, notably in the Global South.

At the same time, music morphed into a tool of suppression, employed for manipulation, censorship, torture, and murder: the silencing of composers such as Sofia Gubaidolina in the Soviet Union, the kidnapping of musicians, such as Miguel Estrella, in Latin American dictatorships, the systematic use of music as torture under illiberal and liberal regimes, including in US detention centres such as Abu Ghraib, the systematic exclusion of minority music from national media such as the *Arabesk* genre in 1970s Turkey, and the murder of musical artists during the *Khmer Rouge* regime: 90 per cent of all Cambodian pop stars forever vanished between 1975 and 1979. Throughout the world, music has been a cultural practice and a place to promote and contest visions of humanity and human rights, and a cultural power to reinforce the exclusion and oppression of minorities, making the inequalities within political systems or nation-states palpable (Kunkel et al. 2023).

This paper takes what may seem to social scientists and historians as a curious, even unorthodox, approach to grasping this complexity. Rather than focusing on the lens of politics, economics, or the law, it seeks to employ a perspective of audio-based articulations for and against human rights, as they have been fashioned and understood as forms of "music". Working from the position that aesthetics, society, and politics are inseparable and focusing on the sounds, actors, and the context of musical performances and media cultures, this essay investigates how music worked as a sonic promotion of human rights visions and issues but also as a venue challenging those very demands. Specifically, it asks: why have musical productions since 1945 championed human rights? How were human rights and their contestations articulated via music and musical practices across regions and genres? Where and how were such musical expressions staged, distributed, and publicised? To what extent do musical sounds bear semiotic as well as affective potentials that serve as a generator for historical articulations and manifestations of political power? To reach a more thorough examination of music's entanglement with power – biopolitical, emotional, psychological – the essay seeks to figure out a roadmap for how to properly theorise the acoustic dimension of human rights through the lens of power by way of some recent strands of sono-political theory (James 2019). By way of a hypothesis, the authors hold that music has entered the arena of a globalised world, offering people an emotional, transregional, and

crossgenre forum to imagine, promote, but also contest human rights outside the parameters of official politics, economics, and the law and, thus, endow it with new meaning. As a result, the concept of human rights as such has morphed into something very different and difficult to grasp by common language-based definition or discourse analysis. Put differently, human rights, this paper argues, must be fundamentally rethought in terms of its sonic articulations.

In this context, music is not merely a passive reflection of social, cultural, and political power relations but an active force shaping sociopolitical structures. Music and sound studies scholars have argued that the study of music in the context of political history can show us something that we otherwise would not see. Music constitutes a sensation of foreboding change (Attali 1985) – it makes advocacy, protest, exclusion, and suppression tangible by evoking feelings. Historians can retrace this phenomenon by examining written, oral, and audio sources that focus on either creating or reflecting on such moments of transformation, denial, and dissent. In this context, the term "music" refers to musical pieces, sounds, and practices that are 1) thematically related to human rights, 2) censored, banned, or targeted in any other way by authoritarian, anti-human rights regimes, 3) promoted by these very regimes in the form of, for example, official state music but also sonic tortures, 4) composed for, or appropriated for, memory-related rituals and events in post-dictatorial, democratic societies, and finally 5) not intentionally and officially crafted or staged to envision or violate human rights, but do so implicitly, as they are charged with political meanings or power in a specific context or setting. The political nature of music, that is, may not always depend on human intention.

Here is where human rights come in: Any domain of music, no matter the form, content or context, can become intertwined with human rights issues. As a result, historians and musicologists need to work with an epistemological and methodological framework capable of including different, indeed, all kinds of music regardless of genre or region. This framework opens up perspectives which account for the rich and multiple manifestations and articulations of human rights in music and render the history of music and human rights as an entangled one, paying attention to both regional musical development and contestations as well as transregional, intercontinental connections among actors, stages, productions, and aesthetics.

Thus, three premises inform the research agenda of music and human rights. First, after World War II, aligning music and human rights became common to aesthetic practice and discourse. In this, the musical experience did not simply reflect human rights advocacy but occasionally fuelled the implementation and popularisation of human rights initiatives and ideas. Throughout the last seventy years, musical venues and practices have inspired influential campaigns and movements within the global political arena, often by way of casual emotional attraction ("slacktivism"), such as in the case of the legendary Amnesty International concerts in the 1980s (Weinstein 1989). While these affective attractions, aesthetic visions, and artistic contextualisation of human rights did not always succeed in promoting human rights efficiently, they did yield a contentious plethora of often regionally and individually diverse musical imaginations, crafting a new language addressing human rights concerns.

Second, there is a good deal of debate about what exactly constitutes human rights. In this paper, human rights are understood to be a highly polysemic term, not merely a concept primarily coined by North American and Western European postwar liberal democracies. At the geopolitical level, the 1948 UDHR would have been impossible without the signatures of the Soviet Union (USSR) and

other Marxist-oriented states and social movements around the world. In Latin America, human rights organisations were rarely associated with liberalism because the dictatorships they fought were themselves identified as economically "liberal". Progressive thinkers from China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union developed their own brand of progressive thinking on the issue of human rights. In 1990, member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation signed the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, which built upon but, at the same time, crucially reformulated the central ideals of the 1948 UDHR in accordance with the Shariah. While critics of the notion of human rights are often portrayed as relativists or defenders of cultural singularities, there has been a very active leftist, universalist, progressive critique of human rights that denounced human rights as an ideological function of capitalist societies based on individualism (Lefort 1979; Invernizzi-Acetti 2016). Such diversity – indeed, cacophony – of voices is important to examine in the interplay of music and human rights.

Finally, and related to the first two premises, competing visions and formulations of human rights in the musical world continually modify and put into perspective the extent to which a musical work qualifies as relevant for the story of human rights. Dallapiccola's "Il Prigioniero" is set in the Inquisition times and does not make any direct claim on the contemporary human rights situation, whereas Nono's "Intolleranza" does precisely that, from a Communist perspective. With the same criteria, Beethoven's "Fidelio", among many other 19th-century operas, are today often considered as works on human rights. In the same vein, human rights in music are often conflated with the notion of civil rights and social protest at large, to the extent that the lines between them become blurry (Romero et al. 2023). The music of many hip-hop artists, such as Queen Latifah, or Public Enemy deals with racial injustice and racist state or police violence – which places these musicians squarely within the human rights discourse even though they do not always explicitly cite the term nor global debates. The evolving resignification according to the evolution of context is thus a basic hermeneutical problem typical for the study of history. The two themes outlined in the next section are attentive to the fact that human rights and their contestation can constitute an objective and a practice without the term being used.

In sum, since the end of World War II, music and human rights have become inextricably related, eventually crafting a new understanding of human rights. To this end, this paper presents a model to reconstruct an entangled history of music and human rights. This framework may help future scholarship to further investigate how music made the promotion and contestation of human rights tangible, show how communities the world over imagined but also infringed upon human rights as a collective experience, and, thus, pave new avenues to think about and study human rights, and more generally, music and politics at large. Furthermore, the dialogue between epistemologies and methodologies from history, sound studies, and musicology may point to new ways of thinking about politics, especially in terms of affect. Both historians and scholars of sound studies have recently highlighted the need to study affect (Thompson/Biddle 2013; Frevert 2016; Garcia-Mispireta 2023) as a way to explore new horizons and opportunities for scholarship across disciplines worldwide. This essay does precisely that by combining transnational music research (Janz/Yang 2019; Corona/Madrid 2008; Gunner/Pennfold 2017; Levi 2018), emotional history (Plamper 2014; Rosenwein 2010), and the study of international history (Gienow-Hecht/Schumacher 2003) and human rights across musical genres and continents.

## 4 MUSIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The alignment of two key developments marked the postwar era: the rise of and challenge of the global human rights discourse and the democratisation of musical production and performance. These two developments were not coincidental but, in fact, fed on each other to craft global human rights imagery. There was, indeed, a beleaguered interplay between human rights advocacy and contestation on the one hand and music composition and performance on the other. In tandem with the momentum of decolonisation, civil, women's and LGBTQI rights movements and the discourse on cultural diversity in society and politics, an increasingly diversified, globalised and ultimately contentious music market and culture emerged after World War II (Fléchet et al. 2023). Such diversification mirrored the paradox running through musical productions since World War II – that is, appeals to universalism in sound and discourse relating to human rights simultaneously produced or reinforced ethnic, racial, and national particularisms. While globalising markets on the one hand and politics on the other increasingly strove to integrate and recolonise geographically diverse regions, local artists, communities, and regional organisations often deliberately chose or invented unique musical styles through which they could express themselves in their "own sonic language" (identity politics) at home and abroad. For example, Johannesburg-born singer and human-rights activist Miriam Makeba was musically tied to African, Latin American, and Caribbean, notably Cuban, influences, professionally to the US (where her career first flourished), and politically to anti-apartheid activism around the world. Similarly, regional music styles in Latin America and the Caribbean, often mixed with outside influences, served as powerful expressions that aesthetically articulated the merger of protest and local identity (Illiano/Sala 2010; McCann 2004). Music in these diverse geographical regions, that is, was equally influenced by European and African imports since the 16th century, enslaved and free, that eventually triggered new challenges to the status quo in a postcolonial vein, both in popular music (*Tejano*, *salsa, tango*, rap, hip-hop) and classical music (Hilda Dianda and Coriún Aharonián).

Curiously, research particularly dedicated to the history of music and human rights remains scarce. A few case studies exist: Esteban Buch's "Trauermarsch" (2017) examines how, in 1977, Daniel Barenboim and the Orchestre de Paris used classical music as a quasi-diplomatic tool in the tense bilateral relations of France and Argentina. Buch shows that the Orchestre struggled with the dilemma of performing in a country haunted by state-sanctioned oppression. The collections by Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (2003), as well as Ian Peddie (2011), provide case studies that show the use of popular music as a means of advocating for human rights, but they focus on the activities of individual artists or groups, specific locations, and provide no link to the global history of music and human rights (see also Fifer 2022; Ghadery 2022; Harrison 2020; Kirchschlaeger 2021; Mihr/Gibney 2014; Romola 2019). Others have implicitly pointed to human rights challenges in music: Dean Vuletic's dynamic history of the Eurovision Song Contests since 1959 observes that the event's increasing commercialisation as well as calls for social diversity have contributed to what the author calls a "fraught relationship with democratic values in post-communist societies" (Vuletic 2018: 188). M. J. Grant, Rebecca Möllemann, Ingvill Morlandstö, Simone C. Münz, and Cornelia Nuxoll (2013) have addressed the question of how music in conflict may affect security, justice, and non-violent conflict resolution. Marsha Baxter (2007) has documented cases of music education designed to foster equity and social justice in a racially diverse environment. Felicity Laurence and Olivier Urbain have examined questions of universality, consciousness, and

connection in their edition “Music and Solidarity” (2011), including a particularly instructive essay by Maria Elisa Pinto Garcia on music as a storytelling device to describe and heal from past human rights abuse. Ethnomusicologist Nomi Dave, having worked in Guinea with Sierra Leonean, Liberian, and Ivorian refugees, postulates a focus away from official human rights concerts, music-based human rights initiatives, and music’s alleged universalism to music’s “practical, real-world effects” (Dave 2015: 2). Dave argues that informal music or dance practice in local spaces – none of which explicitly reference or allude to human rights – allow “for social cohesion to build amongst groups” as well as a “tool for overcoming trauma” (Dave 2015: 10). In a related way, Sara Marcus (2023) has recently traced US history from the Reconstruction Era to the 1980s AIDS crisis to show how individual musical pieces provided important means of coping with political disappointments. She argues that, throughout the 20th century, politically marginalised groups have used music constantly to express their unrealised desires for liberation.

The lacuna of studies on music and human rights is puzzling because a number of historiographical trends indicate the stark need for such a history: First, amid an explosion of research dedicated to human rights (Addo 1999; Keys 2014; Moyn 2010; Ruggie 2013; Sasson 2016; Wettstein 2009), an increasing number of historians have already pointed to the need for inserting culture into the study of human rights. They have postulated that the history of human rights should decentre key moments and sites of attention, such as the UDHR of 1948, the Helsinki Accords of 1975, or the European Court of Human Rights (Borgwardt 2005; Eckel 2014). They point to geographical differences, different temporalities, the shallow image of human rights in many regions of the world (Jensen 2016) and the local impetus of decolonisation as a force to reform human rights norms in international fora (Burke 2010; Meirelles 2016; Sanders 2016; Walling 2015). Some historians have specifically looked at cultural developments, including literature, architecture, and sports, such as the Olympics (Bradley 2016; Human Rights Research and Education Centre 2016; Keys 2019; Loeffler 2014), as places where human rights were either promoted, contested, or both. These scholars share an interest in the cultural construction of global human rights imagery as an imaginative form of transnational humanistic culture with a stock of iconic images and aesthetic forms. Michael Galchinsky (2016) and Joseph R. Slaugther (2006), for example, have raised intriguing questions about how twentieth-century literature was entangled with human rights in foundational ways.

What is more, in the past fifteen years, there has already been a growing body of scholarship investigating music in the context of international relations, postcolonialism, and transnationalism. A number of authors have highlighted the significance of music as a form of nonverbal political communication and contestation in post-1945 politics and international relations (Gienow-Hecht 2012, 2023b; Kelly 2003; Ramel 2011; Schneider 2006; Street 2012) as a means of cultural diplomacy and transborder relations (Dunkel/Nitzsche 2018; Fosler-Lussier 2015; Gienow-Hecht 2003; Rockwell 1997; Schmelz 2009) and as an identity-building force since the early modern period (Ahrendt et al. 2014; Buch 1999; Gienow-Hecht 2018). Much of this research has focused on jazz, rock, and pop music (Poiger 2000). Penny von Eschen (2004), for example, discusses US State Department initiatives promoting imperialist ideas of universal freedom with the help of jazz musicians who then criticised US policies while abroad. A number of case studies have also examined the political meaning of rock and pop performances such as Udo Lindenberg, Pink Floyd, and Die Toten Hosen in the former Warsaw Pact states (Gienow-Hecht 2000; Jones 2009; Poiger 2000; Schneider 2004; Street et. al. 2008). Classical music has joined this forum of historical investigation as a latecomer (Beckles Wilson

2009, 2013; Franklin 2005; Gienow-Hecht 2012, 2015: 8; Senghaas 2013; Taruskin 2009). Here, the history of US musical diplomacy appears to be a vibrant field (Ansari 2012; Croft 2015; Davenport 2009; Eschen 2004; Fosler-Lussier 2015; Mikkonen/Suutari 2016; Poiger 2000). Literature on postcolonial music scenes has pointed out how, in the face of increasingly uneven globalisation, actors, bands, and orchestras on and off stage in the Global South use different genres of music as a cultural manifestation to merge identity and opposition to Western domination (Ansell 2004; Ballantine 2012; Connell/Gibson 2004; Coplan 2007; Meintjes 2003; Muller 2011; Olaniyan 2004; Omojola 2009; Petersen 2009; Steingo 2017). Scholars of music from a range of fields, including anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology, and history, have highlighted the significance of postcolonial music in global history (Radano/Olanyian 2016; Taylor 1997). In "Noise Uprising", Michael Denning (2015) shows how in the 1930s, shellac disks carried musical idioms and styles including *flamenco* (from Seville), *marabi* (Johannesburg), *samba* (Rio de Janeiro), jazz (New Orleans), *tango* (Buenos Aires), *hula* (Hawaii), and *kroncong* (Jakarta) around the world, eventually becoming the "soundtrack to decolonisation". Likewise, Bob W. White (2011) studies musicians Gilberto Gil and David Byrne in tandem with other artists from the Global South, like Oumou Sangaré and Youssou N'Dour, to reveal the inner workings of musical encounter and consumption on a global scale. Shana Redmond (2013) has examined how songs transformed into weapons of resistance in the African diaspora, merging protest movements and transregional solidarity.

Building on these strands of existing literature, we suggest a conceptual framework to write an entangled and cohesive history of music and human rights in a global context. We aim to tackle the question of why and how the promotion, negotiation, and contestation of human rights have manifested in sound aesthetics, how musical actors and stages have shaped human rights agendas and their rejection, and what larger musical contexts shape human rights advocacy and contestation.

## 5 METHODOLOGY: "ACTORS AND STAGES" – "AESTHETICS AND MUSIC"

Music and human rights can pertain to three different interactions: music can be, above all, an expression through which human rights discourse is articulated, negotiated, and contested explicitly by outspoken political activists. Moreover, the struggle over the composition, production, performance, and consumption of music can morph into a fight over human rights. Finally, music can have its own effects on human rights issues, either because it anticipates or enhances human rights contentions and sociopolitical power structures.

The transdisciplinary framework outlined here can be used to guide more detailed studies combining archival research or oral history interviews with artists, journalists, concert attendants, media listeners, and sound analysis. We suggest two different research themes, each focusing on a particular facet of music production, performance, and consumption that we believe weave a net between the research fields of music and sound studies on the one hand and history on the other. "Actors and Stages" reflects on sites and agency in musical practices. "Aesthetics and Music", in turn, entails the analysis of various and often competing sound worlds throughout different parts of the globe and connects these to human rights issues. This approach aims to develop a novel methodology because the two have not been used in tandem before and, more importantly, because it helps generate research results based on archival and musical matter reflecting the emotional dimension of human rights in both promotion and contestation.

## 5.1 ACTORS AND STAGES

Motifs and motivations of organisations and musicians giving concerts either in the name of human rights or to defy the same are crucial to the investigation of human rights. Such an approach needs to be specifically dedicated to the role of places and people in the sound worlds outlined below. The efficacy of this type of performance hinges on the actors' visibility and opportunity to climb and claim public stages. "Actor", in this context, can refer to anybody involved in the genesis, performance, production, or consumption of music.

The key concept informing such an approach revolves around the concept of "the stage". While the stage concept has been used for the regional study of music and US diplomatic history (Gienow-Hecht 2012), it has never been applied globally. The stage is a designated physical space marked by intensified attention and display, a cultural situation involving the performer and observer. Scholars of drama believe that situations involving looking, showing, and listening represent a stage where audiences practice participation. Simultaneously, scholars from the field of performance studies argue that the stage is also a place for undoing meanings taken for granted, which often yields ambiguous forms of cultural expressions. Nothing on stage, that is, is meaningless. The director, conductor, bandleader, actors, and musicians all seek to generate meaning, and so do audiences. All spectators typically generate some sort of interpretation, even if that interpretation remains rudimentary, and to do so, they strain their perception, including all of their senses: they feel, they listen, they sense, and they smell (Fischer-Lichte 2008; Marx 2006, 2018).

Repertories likewise chosen by actors play a key role in staging affect because they cross musical genres. We know from the history of benefit concerts (O'Connell 2011) that musical actors in the past have sought to mobilise people by performing specific compositions from both classical and pop music canon. For example, classical composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven and pieces such as the "Lacrimosa" or the "Ninth Symphony" feature on top of such concerts, allegedly projecting composers' love of liberty.

The theme puts much emphasis on the symbolic value of "place" in staged musical affect. Places may be designated concert stages, but also streets, squares, religious buildings, prisons, beaches, public institutions, and train stations. These multifarious locations provide space for musical performances to be translated into political meaning and studied in depth. For example, the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave a series of anniversary concerts in honour of the UDHR beginning in December of 1949 in New York's famous, highly visible Carnegie Hall; successive concerts were moved into the General Assembly Hall, an event that we examine more closely later. Likewise, between 1986 and 1998, Amnesty International organised a series of concerts, culminating in the 1988 high-profile "Human Rights Now!" world tour, a six-week, five-continent, fifteen-nation, twenty-concert tour across the world with the aim of letting people, as one artist put it, "feel" the interconnectedness of their worlds and fears.

To provide a full picture of music as a site of human rights promotion and contestation, "Actors and Stages" can also examine stages as sites of heavy conflict over human rights abrogation with their attendant actors. Anticipating latter-day visions of women's rights as human rights, from the 1960s on, on stage and in orchestra pits throughout the world, women decried their own lack of presence and the denial of their freedom to play. For example, the regular performances of the Women's Philharmonic became a picture book example of activism in the name of human rights demands. Founded in 1981, the orchestra served

as a forum for female conductors and players who joined instruments and batons to demand their right to cultural expression as stipulated in the UDHR and promote female players and composers on stage. As a counterpoint, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra cancelled a performance planned for the closing ceremony of an international wrestling event on 29 November 2015 after the authorities objected to the presence of women musicians among the orchestra members. In both instances, actors – activists and officials – used symphony stages to promote or abrogate women's physical and intellectual presence in orchestras (Rauscher et al. 2018).

Further sites of human rights abrogation also include censorship, bans and persecution. Asian authoritarian regimes such as Ne Win (1962 to 1988) in Burma (Selth 2017) imposed strict aesthetic regulations on the creation and performance of music. We know today that in the 1960s, Cambodia produced a vibrant multi-national musical culture symbolising the utopia of a borderless world, fusing Caribbean-tinged rhythms, contemporary American rock, pop, and soul with lyrics sung in Khmer. During the *Khmer Rouge* regime from 1975 to 1979, 90 per cent of all Cambodian pop stars, including celebrities such as Ros Serey Sothe, Mao Sareth, and Sinn Sisamouth, vanished in one of the worst genocides in Asia (Mamula 2008).

In Latin America, authoritarian states systematically censored musical productions by "undesirable" artists, such as the recording "Banquete Dos Mendigos" concert in Rio de Janeiro in 1973 (Catano 1994). Artists were persecuted, imprisoned, and tortured artists, such as the Argentinian pianist Miguel de Estrella, and others were murdered, such as Victor Jara in Chile. Simultaneously, the Teatro Colón in Argentina transformed classical music institutions into a force of stability and invited Western ensembles on tours, for instance, the Orchestre de Paris' in Buenos Aires (Buch 2017).

In Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, postwar artists and concerts banned or at least questioned since the 1950s included a host of Western pop idols but also domestic jazz and rock groups that articulated repression, such as Mashina Vremeni (Pekacz 1994). Socialist governments, in particular, frowned upon jazz concerts as a public Western articulation of individual freedom, while regional musicians emphatically celebrated the genre as a personal expression and opposition towards authoritarianism (Tsipursky 2016), not much unlike latter-day rappers in Africa (Charry 2012).

Yet, over time, authoritarian leaders began to understand jazz as the music of the oppressed. From the 1970s on, acceptance of rock music often served as an instrument of appeasement (for domestic youth) and cultural diplomacy (to improve relations with liberal regimes). Even works banned in Maoist China, such as the "Butterfly Lovers Concerto", arranged by Chen Gang and He Zhanhao, eventually became one of China's cultural exports and rose to international fame. We also know that since the 1980s, some authoritarian regimes went on to lift bans and turn formerly undesirable music into major diplomatic tools and cultural export products: in China, this change included versions of Western pop ballads (*Liuxing*) and rock music (*Yaogun*) (Baranovitch 2003) to the extent that in the 1980s, rock musician Chui Jian became a notable actor in the quest for the freedom of self-expression and the first ever popular music artist in the country to obtain permission to travel abroad to give concerts on international stages (Ho 2011: 35–36).

Appropriation of the genre, however, did not signal appropriation of protest. We know, for example, that as late as 2012, Russian police jailed the female punk band Pussy Riot for criticising Russian President Vladimir Putin during a concert in Moscow (Sharafutdinova 2014). Many of the banned artists subsequently featured prominently on pop and classical programme stages in liberal states

as an expression of solidarity. For example, Pussy Riot members were greeted by Madonna live on stage on the eve of the Olympics in Sochi, Russia, in 2014. Here, music fulfils a triple function: it serves to celebrate human rights values in the face of overt oppression, it resonates with a presumed medium of liberty and freedom, and it offers itself as a soundscape to reveal, quite literally, how human rights and their opposite sound (Fosler-Lussier 2007).

The historical role of music in the context of human rights violations on concealed stages, such as prisons and execution and torture chambers, represents another site to be studied in the context of actors and stages. Using music as a tool of suppression means converting a defining aspect of what makes us human into an effort to dehumanise individuals. Compromises incurred by national orchestras playing under authoritarian regimes are well studied (Trümpi 2016). In German concentration camps, inmates played for leisure but also for fellow prisoners marching to the gas chambers. We also know that during the Chilean and Argentinian dictatorships, prison guards used music – classical, opera, and other genres – to torture inmates. Local guards and soldiers used music as a tool of brutalisation (Chornik, 2018; Cohen/Zaharnoff, 2018, Herrero/Lutowicz 2009, Minsburg/Lutowicz 2010; Morris 2001) and even inspired latter-day torturers in North America. During the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, US officials tested musical methods for rendering the enforced extraction of information invisible (Cusick 2006; Pieslak 2009), ranging from heavy metal, opera arias, and patriotic marches to children's tunes, including Disney's "It's a Small World" (Daughtry 2015).

## 5.2 AESTHETICS AND MUSIC

Human rights and their contestation can, thus, be delineated in a plethora of sound worlds. Aesthetics, in this context, refers to how musicians envision, compose, and perform music, as well as the ways critics and audiences consume, listen, enjoy, react to, and criticise music. In general, musicologists highlight the ambivalent character of music insofar as its sounds can sonically stabilise and reinforce existing sociopolitical power structures as well as offer a site of aesthetic utopias where existing social and political relations can be symbolically overridden. Scholars of the nascent field of "sound studies", in particular, emphasise that linkages between sound and the sociopolitical, such as the previously discussed examples, reflect cultural constructions; many, like Small (2001), argue that music has no universal essence. The historical circumstances that make certain sounds into what they eventually signify always have to be analysed. Historians seeking to reconstruct the history of music and human rights thus need to pay attention to sound and identify the symbolic dimensions artists choose to render a political message for a listening public. On a methodological level, sounds can be treated as a primary source and can be analysed in close connection to social orders, hierarchies, and political orders.

From the 1980s and 1990s onward, working under what is often referred to as "new musicology", music scholars have begun to combine perspectives from cultural history, cultural studies, and aesthetics. They analyse music as a social text (Middleton 1990; Shepherd 1991) or, in the words of music anthropologist Steven Feld, "sound structure as social structure" (Feld 1984). Defining this approach, musicologist Susan McClary understands music as "a medium that participates in social formation by influencing the ways we perceive our feelings, our bodies, our desires, our very subjectivities – even if it does so surreptitiously, without most of us knowing how" (McClary 1994: 211). While McClary makes clear that music, often in very subtle and subliminal ways, structures the reproduction of sociopolitical hegemonies, other authors like Georgina Born (2011: 380–381) and

Sheila Whiteley (2006) point to the transgressive and utopian potentials of music which, as Whiteley phrases it, “provides a specific insight into the ways in which fantasy – whether through watching a live performance or in the intimacy of listening to music in the private sphere of the bedroom – can signal both what is denied and what we would like to experience” (Whiteley 2006: 251). Elaborating on these perspectives, “Aesthetics and Music” aims to account for the Janus-headed power of music as an aesthetic practice which, on the one hand, structures the everyday and works in support of the sociopolitical status quo, while, on the other, encourages listeners and performers to enter sonified (i.e. non-speech audio) worlds that differ from the everyday, allowing for transitional experiences and critical reassessments of the ordinary.

To tackle the interplay of aesthetics, music, and human rights, the rather recent field of sound studies appears tailor-made. For the last twenty years, scholars working in this – in itself already a transdisciplinary – field have shown how (musical) sounds, sound technologies, and modes of listening historically shaped the way people understand and form their modes of being (subjectivities, bodies) and position themselves and others in relation to their social environments (Kassabian 2013; Sterne 2003; Thompson 2002). In particular, sound studies have highlighted the need to study music in its affective dimensions (Goodman 2010; Thompson 2017). Such an approach shows how music’s symbolic as well as affective potentials have profound implications for the history of human rights.

From the perspectives of musicology and sound studies, musical sounds are rife with symbolic and semiotic meanings (Brackett 1995; Hawkins 2002; Tagg 1979). Social conditions register in music through sonic codes which articulate cultural power relations in terms of, for instance, gender (McClary 1991, Jarman-Ivens 2011, Hansen 2021), race (Rose 1994, Stoever 2016), class (Fox 2004, Wiseman-Trouse 2008), national identity (Schiller 2018), or intersections thereof (Hubbs 2014, Brooks 2021). Listeners perceive musical sounds as expressions of the social world because they have learned to associate certain parameters, such as the sound of a certain instrument or the timbre of a voice, with region, identity and so on (Eidsheim 2015; Smith 2008). Cultural differences are mapped on musical sounds, which then function as signifiers: thus, the sitar sounds like “India”, and the bagpipe sounds like “Scotland”. From this point of view, music can tell historians much about the times, places, and social power structures they wish to examine. The application of sound studies and musicology enables the historian to pay attention to the qualities of certain sound parameters to ask what kind of statements artists and audiences make in terms of identity politics: a Scot playing the bagpipe might confirm stereotypes of “Scottishness,” while a Scot playing the sitar might not (and would perhaps be regarded as an act of cultural appropriation). It is possible, then, to analyse musical sounds in close relation to social discourse (e.g. their manifestations in concert reviews, press, and media) and to reconstruct how people perceive specific sounds in specific contexts as a way to promote human rights (e.g. transnational human rights concerts), negotiate and transform their meanings (e.g. musicians who wish to make a political statement through song and composition), or rigidly contest these by symbolically underlining the rule of authority and violence (e.g. military marches or festivity parades in authoritarian regimes).

Studying music in the context of human rights history means addressing both sung music and non-verbal music. The most obvious way to articulate political visions in music is through lyrics and language. Tellingly, after World War II, popular music experienced an explicit lyric politicisation (Friedman 2013). For example, the post-World War II folk revival in many different regions of the

world gave rise to politicised grassroots movements in which singer-songwriters accompanied themselves on guitar to sing about exploitation, war, and alienation countered by visions of anti-consumerism, solidarity, and communal life (Brocken 2003; Mitchell 2007; Petrus/Cohen 2015). In the counter cultures of the 1960s, such protest songs thrived globally, ranging from the North American and British new folk movement to German *Liedermacher*, Italian *cantautori*, Brazilian *tropicalismo,* and Japanese *fōku*. U.S. American singer Joan Baez repeatedly rendered her famous version of "We Shall Overcome," a utopian song derived from African-American gospel, notably at the 1963 March on Washington. The song's lyrics, speaking from a "we" perspective addressing the quest and the hope of collectively leaving behind the inequalities and oppressive structures of the status quo, are emblematic of the lyrical protest of the 1960s folk singers and the call for solidarity against social and economic injustice. "We Shall Overcome", indeed, became one of the unofficial anthems (along with other songs such as Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come") of the Civil Rights Movement. As such, the song expressed a contemporary counter-cultural sensibility channelled through music.

Depending on state policy, artists had different choices about what and how to play. These choices, in turn, bore directly on the meaning of human rights and music's ability to foreground, reflect, or defy them. While Baez never had to face major threats for singing political folk songs in the United States, artists operating in authoritarian regimes routinely struggled with state oppression. At the peak of the Brazilian *tropicalismo* movement in 1968, the government arrested singer-songwriters Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso for public performance and distribution of their overtly political songs, sentencing them to three months in prison, then forcing them to leave the country (Napolitano 1998). Other *tropicalismo* artists, however, such as the experimental musician Tom Zè, were never charged. Zè managed to produce a steady stream of critical songs throughout the late 1960s and 1970s by toning down the political content through wry metaphors and irony. Many of Zè's songs, like his famous "São, São Paulo, Meu Amor", satirically attacked the strong class cleavage and injustice of Brazilian society. The song even won an award at the national TV contest Festival de Música Popular Brasileira in 1968, the same year Gil and Veloso were arrested. "São, São Paulo, Meu Amor" sarcastically pointed at the government's massive civil rights violations at the expense of the underprivileged rural population and the ignorance among the privileged urban upper and middle classes who were not suffering under military rule (Dunn 2009). Zè's sarcastic love confession for (and actual critique of) life in São Paulo was set to a catchy, happy, and simple pop melody, which even animated the TV studio audience at the *Festival de Música Popular Brasileira* to sing along with him.

The two contrasting examples of Baez and Zé illustrate an important point highlighted by musicologists and sound studies scholars: musical sounds are never just a neutral container for lyrical content but are actively involved in framing and shaping the form of a political message or meaning in a specific context or situation. Given the sociopolitical circumstances, Zé worked out his political protest through sonic camouflaging and irony (the "happy" and catchy pop song, seemingly innocent and appropriate to sing along with). In doing so, he managed to avoid the fate of Gil and Veloso; instead, he even received permission to climb up on the stage of a national television contest. Baez, on the other hand, articulated protest in a very straightforward and serious musical manner as she performed her version in a way that spoke to the quest for honesty and authenticity typical of the aesthetics of the 1960s folk song: a down-to-earth-arrangement of a voice accompanied by the sounds of an acoustic guitar, thereby meeting the expectations of her

audience and, despite all the differences to Zé's irony, just like Zé animating the crowd gathered at the March on Washington to sing along with her. What is more, the two examples also illustrate the affective dimension of music, including collective mood management: Zè used catchy pop sounds that matched the happy party atmosphere of the TV festival (the video footage shows people cheering and enthusiastic and energised bodies), whereas Baez performed a song which borrowed from the tradition of spirituals, achieving a sort of contemplative communion among her audience (the video footage shows people holding hands and bodies swaying slowly to the music). Both songs aesthetically fit the occasions, and the audience could entrain the feelings conveyed, thereby aligning themselves (whether consciously or unwittingly) with the counter-cultural sensibility of the music. Thus, both lyrics and sounds do matter when studying the articulation of politics and human rights in music. The examples of Baez and Zé show that circumstance, situation, and contextualisation of music play a crucial role when artists aesthetically craft and perform their expressions of political protest.

The comparison shows that, not surprisingly, liberal and illiberal regimes differed in their response to music deemed undesirable. State institutions in Eastern Europe used classical music and its attendant institutions to create and guard what they saw as stable social orders throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Simultaneously, they censored certain musical expressions and genres as disruptive. The ideology of socialist realism promoted works portraying the life and reality of the common people. Socialist realism deemed aesthetic expressions of individualised feelings and sentiments as remnants of bourgeois culture and hedonism, and according to this doctrine, socialist leaders saw abstract avant-garde compositions and noise genres as "decadent" outpourings of Western capitalism. Consequently, they put a strict ban on Western popular music or appropriated some genres when staged in "toned down" and socialist terms (Rauhut 1993). Yet the Soviet government's insistence on socialist realism began to wane to the extent that avant-garde Western techniques were tolerated (within specific contexts) since the 1960s (Schmelz 2009). And by the 1970s, many East German composers were incorporating techniques of Western new music without suffering any political consequences. The dichotomy, that is, changed over time and was not uniformly applied everywhere in the Eastern Bloc. For instance, the Polish government tolerated a much wider variety of music than the GDR (Pickhan/Ritter 2011; Schmidt-Rost 2015). Here, the distinction between music and "unmusical" noise gained an additional dimension as it was embedded within the emerging human rights discourse.

Postwar liberal states, in turn, opted for milder – and often contradictory – strategies of control to fight what many perceived as the "musical enemy" from within. "God Save the Queen" (1977), an iconic song by the British punk band The Sex Pistols, for example, was banned by the BBC because it ridiculed the British aristocracy on a symbolic level. By ironically quoting the title lines of the British national anthem in the musical context of loud and heavy punk with singer Johnny Rotten's aggressive vocal delivery, the band uttered their protest against what they saw as a conservative and old-fashioned institution. In addition to the BBC ban, the band was likewise stopped and searched by the police during a performance of that song while cruising on the River Thames during the Silver Jubilee festivities of Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne.

These examples show that sounds bear a symbolic dimension insofar as they work like codes in the sense of semiotics and cultural studies, and their semantic potentials or properties can be analysed. The symbolic dimensions of sounds are manifold. Often, these sound structures originate

in distinct genres like rock, hip-hop, folk, soul, classical, or avant-garde, which evolve around a sonic palette of different musical parameters – such as timbres, rhythms, and harmonic structures – to which societies attribute different values. Musical genres and their sounds are thus charged with certain meanings: they are discursively equated with manifestations of social structures and cultural identities in terms of, for instance, race, class, gender, or generation. In the European and North American context, some genres were delegitimised as being nothing other than "unmusical noise" and regularly came under attack from cultural elites. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, compositions borrowing from or building upon black musical traditions, such as rock'n'roll or hip-hop, have been linked to social unrest, disorder, and vulgarity, as well as sexually immoral, deviant, and criminal behaviours (Rose 1994; Poiger 2000; Mrozek 2019). Entire genres have thus been enmeshed with discourse that (re)produces social differences and stigmas. In the case of hip-hop, for example, the sweeping accusation of its alleged "rawness" and "vulgarity" were (and still are) tied to the racist discourse of white patriarchal society, as bell hooks has argued (hooks 1994).

Because the sound worlds of a genre are always charged with symbolic meanings and brought into conversation with cultural discourse, the choice of genre can be essential for framing or underlining political statements. In other words, artists might work with the sounds of a certain genre because it is discursively entangled with certain symbolic meanings. In her book "The Space Between the Notes. Rock and the Counterculture", Sheila Whiteley (1992) analyses the signature sounds of 1960s rock music regarding their symbolic meanings. She argues that the electrified, warbling, and distorted textures of bands like Cream, The Beatles, Pink Floyd, or Jimi Hendrix articulated the counter-cultural longing for free expression, free sexuality, and alternative forms of spirituality as well as a more liberal view on drugs. While this choice might not always be consciously intended, artists often show a high degree of self-reflection. In 2000, a few months after General Robert Gueï had seized power in Côte d'Ivoire by way of a *coup d'état* and installed a military government, musician Tiken Jah Fakoly reacted with "Promeses de la Caméléon", a protest song that addressed the undemocratic political climate which reinforced inner tensions among ethnic groups and left large parts of the population voiceless. Fakoly explicitly chose reggae for his political message because, to him, it reflected the essential Afro-diasporic protest genre, the "music of opinions" expressing the rights of "those without means" (Reed 2012: 96), thereby situating his music within the political legacy of other Afro-diasporic or African reggae musicians. Thus, Fakoly is a picture book example of how artists strategically employ distinct sound structures to define their political positions. In a globalised world, the politics of reggae travelled rapidly and transgressed its original localities. Artists of colour who do not have an Afro-diasporic background have employed reggae music to protest racist oppression in their home countries, as Elizabeth Turner demonstrates in her study on the 1980s band Herbs from New Zealand (Turner 2022).

While the cases above comprise examples of rather explicit political articulations, musical sounds are also implicitly connected to politics and human rights issues. To make a distinction between political and unpolitical music is, as ethnomusicologist Kerstin Klenke notes, "a rather futile enterprise" since "it is not unusual for political ideology to extend its reach to issues such as fame, family, friendship and musical aesthetics" (Klenke 2019: 62–63). By the same token, scholars of musicology and sound studies emphasise that the unfolding of social order and hierarchies in music does not necessitate any wilful authorship of performers, producers, or other individuals involved. Regardless of the sociopolitical structures or

political systems surrounding it, whether staged, broadcast, or recorded, music always takes on political meanings. These intrinsic political meanings of music are always there. They become all the more powerful thanks to what sound studies scholar Martha Garcia Quiñones (2013) calls in her collection Ubiquitous Musics, meaning the presence of music within various social and mediatised spaces, ranging from fashion stores in international airports to globetrotting street performers, office spaces, and bars. Collectively, these generate soundscapes defining everyday perceptions, sensibilities, and knowledge of individuals, communities, or national audiences.

Put differently, even if they do not realise it, people constantly listen to the political environments in which they live. If that environment celebrates, questions, or contests rights – human, civil, or otherwise – audiences absorb that message every single day. The music played and represented on national media, for example, constructs an aural image of what it means to be a "natural citizen" or denied that status. As Martin Stokes (1992) and Jennifer Lynn Stoever (2016) show for 1970s Turkey and 1930s and 1940s US, the structural exclusion of minority music from national television and radio culture served to reproduce and legitimise social inequalities. Stokes demonstrates how the Turkish government banned the music genre *Arabesk* from officially sponsored airwaves due to its close ties to Arabic musical traditions, notably *Maqam* modes. Turkish officials viewed *Arabesk* as a threat to the nation because its sounds symbolised pan-Islamic civilisation and, additionally, was predominantly practised by Arab and Kurdish-speaking minorities of South East Anatolia. Silencing minority cultures on national broadcasts thus presumably served to stabilise the unity of the Turkish nation-state by exclusion. In a similar vein, Stoever, in her book "The Sonic Color line", studies the structural exclusion of African American artists and music on US broadcasting stations in the 1930s and 1940s due to the radio industry's official white middle-class agenda. Radio in 1930s and 1940s America officially served as a "national" and "democratic" medium, featuring exclusively white artists, white voices, and white sounds on national radio, invoking what Stoever calls a "sonic color line", fixing US citizenship to "white sonic identity" but also eventually evoking protest of those whose music went unheard.

These cases of virtual exclusion of minorities from the national media landscape underline our argument that expression of human rights through music and sound cannot only be found in those moments when they are explicitly announced or staged as such. More often than not, they may be found on an implicit level as well. The historian trying to identify audio-based articulations of human rights, therefore, needs to step beyond the horizon of official human rights documents and declarations and into the everyday culture of sound, including archived radio or television broadcasts as well as song recordings, to excavate "the sound of human rights" – and its manifold contestations.

## 6 DA CAPO: THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERTS

So, what does this all mean when applied to the scenario of the United Nations as outlined in the passage at the beginning of this essay? First of all, what we see on the stages of Carnegie Hall, the General Assembly, and then in the Palais de Nations in Geneva is the attempt to attribute specific emotional meaning to a set of demands that is, for the most part, understood in political and legal terms. These performances show us how musical performance and musical identity not merely reflected but, indeed, anticipated a larger contestation over human rights, one that was to materialise on the popular level a decade later. We see how actors strove and indeed haggled over how to formulate an emotional vision of human rights

– and over who would do the formulating. And we also see how that emotional formulation of human rights – so homogenous in the 1940s and 1950s, then so cacophonic, so diverse, so shared in the 1960s and early 1970s – eventually retreated to what it once had been: the music of the European enlightenment and the Romantics. This is another way of saying that the musical vision and articulation of human rights, at least on the stage of the United Nations, took a moment to balloon into a *multilingua franca* across the globe, only then to morph back into the canon of Western universalism. This surprising if short-lived trajectory foreshadowed a development marking the presence: total compartmentalisation of the human rights discourse on the global level in which each actor, each group has its own version of human rights yet without much reference to related "canons" of rights discourse – think the Cairo Declaration in 1990, think China's "alternative vision" of human rights and its explicit welcome to the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006, think Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro's infamous candidacy for the Human Rights Council in 2019 and his resulting tenure for the coming two years.

Second, the example reveals how an emphasis on the two research venues proposed above, "Aesthetics and Affect" as well as "Actors and Stages," help historians and musicologists to work in tandem and study how a specific set of musical productions since 1949 has both championed and criticised the postwar discourse on human rights. Since 1949, both human rights and their contestations have been articulated via music and musical practices on stages chosen by the General Assembly across regions and genres. The settings, the participating actors, the sound displayed, and the aesthetical framework chosen differed, as did the means of distribution and publication. Thus, the example of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights anniversary concerts shows that music served and, indeed, continues to serve as a language and a forum to imagine the promotion and contestation of human rights on an emotional level, however contested. That language not only reflected but popularised human rights protests. It anticipated global activism by more than a decade.

On a more general level, linking the history of music to the history of human rights can help identify avenues through which actors articulated the promotion and contestation of human rights by emotional, including nonverbal, means. It reveals how actors contextualised and responded to the promises and challenges in musical practices and performances over the course of the second half of the twentieth century – and how audiences and social communities reacted to such aesthetic visions. It also shows that sometimes, no actors or agency in favour of – or opposed to – certain political agendas are needed at all for music to become involved in human rights issues. At the same time, the nexus between music and human rights history identifies some alternative visions produced and promoted in specific locales at different times by means of aesthetic expression or silencing (for example, the detention or even execution of artists) and examines instances of dehumanisation in the global-local context, including music as an instrument of censorship, denial, and torture. Lastly, musical expressions or denials of equal human rights are also often performed or "staged" rather implicitly, as in the exclusion of certain minority music on national television or radio programmes. Here, the perpetual question is whose music is represented and whose is not, who is granted the right and privilege to have a voice to be heard in public, who is authorised to participate in practices of aesthetic or cultural expression and who is not? Since the right or freedom to "speak" to the public always and necessarily implies a listening audience, this latter aspect also entails another right beyond that of voice: that of the freedom of listening (Lacey 2013: 165). Who exactly is addressed or present as the

"listening public", and who is denied the right of access to stages or media as a listener? In other words, how do the distributed sound worlds of a geographically circumscribed territory, such as a nation-state, create virtual exclusions – read inequalities – of and within certain communities?

On a meta-level, studying political history through music and sound triggers an original shift in theoretical knowledge, expands our set of instruments of investigation and, most importantly, enhances our understanding of how political power actually works. Political power is never merely an object of desire, a way to make others follow orders, nor is it exercised through governments, organisations, institutions, and human actors in general. Political power and political contestation are both lodged in sound. Music's ability to affect and generate symbolic orders, feelings, structures of subjectivity, shared (communal) social experiences, and interpersonal relationships allows us to hear the contested and cacophonic sounds of human rights.

The story of the UDHR concerts, by the way, is not yet history. Last year, in December 2023, the United Nations celebrated the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, at the Alhambra Hall in Geneva, Switzerland. The event included "world-class talent from every continent", among these UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Angélique Kidjo and Ukrainian Violinist Yelyzaveta Zaitseva, and, in more than one way, bore more resemblance to the UDHR anniversary concerts in the 1960s and 70s than before and after. Thus, the story continues: after a period of silence, musical diversity is back on the UDHR stage. And one can only hope that it will not take another 25 years for the next concert to celebrate and remind us of what is unquestionable the one central document that serves as a global rights road map for the rights of every individual in the world.

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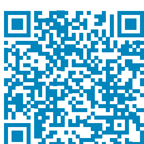

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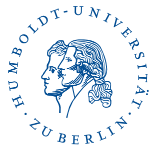

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