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Curated Zones:

Musical Possession and Colonial Identity Expression in Early 20th
Century Cairo through “The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly
1892-1947”

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Abstract

This paper delves into the auditory environments of British colonial hotels in early 20th-century Cairo, exploring how these spaces served as sites of cultural colonization and segregation. Focusing on the musical programming within hotel concert halls and opera houses, the study reveals how European classical music and the rise of jazz were instrumental in reinforcing European cultural hegemony while marginalizing indigenous Egyptian musical traditions. The research introduces the concept of "Curated Zones" to describe the carefully crafted auditory spaces that juxtaposed European and Egyptian cultures, creating a distinct British Caireen identity. These zones were not mere 'comfort zones' for British expatriates but were 'contact zones' where European modernity and Orientalist depictions of Egyptian cultural stagnation were juxtaposed, reinforcing a perceived cultural hierarchy.

The paper also examines the paradoxical adoption of jazz music within these colonial spaces. Despite its roots in African American culture, jazz was embraced as a symbol of European modernity, further distancing the British colonial identity from the indigenous Egyptian culture. This appropriation of jazz underscores the complex dynamics of colonial identity formation, where cultural elements from around the world were co-opted to reinforce British superiority. Through an analysis of colonial media, particularly the periodical "The Sphinx," the paper demonstrates how auditory environments were used to perpetuate Orientalist ideologies and maintain cultural dominance. The study ultimately argues that British colonialism in Egypt was not only a political and economic enterprise but also a profoundly cultural one, where the colonization of auditory spaces played a crucial role in shaping and sustaining the British colonial project. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersections between music, colonialism, and identity formation in the context of early 20th-century Egypt.

The Sphinx

The Magazine

"The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly," published and distributed in Cairo from 1892 to 1947, was an English-language magazine aimed at British expatriates living in Egypt as well as elite, English-speaking Egyptians. Emerging during a period marked by the increasing encroachment of British colonial influence and the shifting socio-political climate of Egypt at the turn of the century, the magazine became a cultural staple for its audience. It not only reported news pertinent to the English-speaking community but also offered detailed accounts of social and sporting events in Egypt, reflecting the interests and lifestyles of the expatriate and upper-class populace. Richly illustrated with photographs and other images, "The Sphinx" was particularly notable for its coverage of the burgeoning hotel and tourist scene in Egypt, catering to the growing number of expatriates and British travel enthusiasts in the country. This publication encapsulates the intersections of colonial presence, technological advancements, and social dynamics during a period of immense colonial migration from the upper classes.

The increase in tourism and contact between Egypt and Britain led to migration and tourism; dynamics demonstrated by the opening of the "Hotel des Anglais" in 1841,¹ which would later be renamed Shepheard's Hotel, as well as several other hotels in the decades to come, as British presence and prominence in Egypt began to rise. Representative of this, "The Sphinx" provides a parallel angle to analyze the culture and community around these hotels and provides insight into the processes of both ex-pat identity building and British identity reification within the British Cairene population.

¹ *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly*. (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library. 1897

What is particularly interesting about these magazines is that they are by no means a musical or musicological-based piece of media, however, music and musical topics appear in nearly every section of the magazines at some point throughout the thirty-six volume collection held by American University at Cairo. Music held a tight grasp on the cultural identity of these British expats, and the relationship between musical cultures and colonial identity creation permeates through all aspects of “The Sphinx” an otherwise one-off cultural magazine, arguably more centered around the automobile industry.

The publications from 1905 to 1923 are particularly interesting for their concentration on British hotels in Egypt, particularly Cairo, and the promotion of cultural events being hosted by these colonial establishments. In the interest of brevity and specificity, I will be focusing on magazine coverage of events, during this time frame to get a grasp of the epistemological process of creating a new British Cairene identity as well as the preservation of British upper-class culture, reaffirming the bourgeoisies abroad of their continued high-class status in the colonial hotels in Cairo. The Shepherd’s Hotel, The Continental-Savoy, The Ghezireh Palace Hotel, The National Hotel, The Grosvenor House Hotel, and The Heliopolis House become the concert halls, cultural waypoints, and areas of interest throughout “The Sphinx.”² Moreover, These magazine excerpts provide a window into the exclusionary culture surrounding the cultural events hosted at these hotels and the inner workings of Colonial minds abroad. This is a process that many Historians are passionate about, Dr. Ziad Fahmy is a great inspiration for the sonification of history in his transcendent subaltern works, “An Earwitness to History: Street Hawkers and Their Calls in Early 20th-century Egypt” and his longer work, *Street Sounds: Listening to Everyday life in Modern Egypt*.

² *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly*. (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library.

Time Frame

The early 1900s in British colonial Cairo were marked by significant political, economic, and cultural transformations under British rule. British control of Egypt began in 1882 following the Anglo-Egyptian War, and Egypt officially became a British protectorate in 1914, integrating it into the British Empire. This period saw a strategic emphasis on the Suez Canal, vital for maintaining trade routes to India and other parts of the empire, underscoring the canal's economic importance. This led to an immensely dense and complicated colonial relationship between British diplomats and expats moving into Egypt around the turn of the century, simultaneously regulating governmental legislation to provide profit for British corporations and shareholders but also undertaking a cultural mission to expand the scope of British Identity and the world it occupied. As Lord Cromer noted, "One of the peculiarities of the Anglo-Saxon race is that when they take possession or semipossession of a country, which does not belong to them, they are apt in one respect to forget the position which they occupy towards the inhabitants."³

British colonial society in Cairo was a mix of expatriates, military personnel, and administrators who centered their social lives around exclusive clubs, hotels, and institutions designed to meet British tastes and standards. The fascination with ancient Egypt, known as Egyptomania, spurred a tourism boom as British and other European tourists flocked to Cairo, seeking both the exotic and the familiar comforts of home. The British colonial presence introduced significant urban development in Cairo, incorporating Western architectural styles, infrastructure improvements, and enhanced public services. As a result, the city's landscape was

³ Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Modern Egypt*. (London: Macmillan 1908) Pt. 4, 222

transformed, with new roads, bridges, and public buildings reflecting a distinctly European aesthetic.

The establishment of Western-style schools and educational institutions, alongside Christian missionary activities, aimed to spread Western values and religion. These efforts were part of a broader cultural imposition, as British cultural practices, including music, theater, and sports, became increasingly prominent in Cairo. Hotels and public spaces hosted events that promoted British and European culture, reinforcing colonial ideologies and creating a sense of cultural superiority. As Edward Said famously argued, "Orientalism... is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."⁴

Egyptian nationalist movements, fueled by discontent with British control, culminated in the 1919 Egyptian Revolution, a major uprising against British rule that eventually led to Egypt gaining partial independence in 1922. Saad Zaghlul, a key figure in the nationalist movement, articulated the Egyptian sentiment, stating, "Egypt for the Egyptians."⁵ Amidst this political backdrop, Cairo emerged as a hub for intellectuals, writers, and artists, fostering cross-cultural interactions that influenced various aspects of life, including music, art, and literature. This would eventually lead up to large scale tourism and expat immigration to Egypt from the British populace but also to an international level with diplomats, tourists, and academics traveling from all over Europe. *The Sphinx* came to prominence in the colonial scene starting in the early 1890s giving this magazine increasing significance in analyzing this pivotal and transformative time period. This magazine was promoted at the behest of the "Egypt Promotion Association" – established in 1907 by King Fuad to encourage and sustain tourism to Egypt, demonstrating the

⁴ Edward W Said, *Orientalism*. "Introduction," (New York, Pantheon Books) 1978. 3

⁵ P. J. Vatikiotis, (Panayiotis J.). *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

interlinking of British colonial forces and the Egyptian monarchy. Egypt, at least the idea of an ‘Egypt,’ garnered a great deal of attention in the European academic mind for centuries before this pivotal time period. One pathway in which European academics fantasized about an imaginary ‘Egypt’ is through musical culture.

Egyptomania

European fascination with the music of the ‘Orient’ dates back centuries with the increased contact between cultures with the expansion of Imperialist powers securing colonial footholds around the world. Interestingly, the intensity of the study and consummation of musical scholarship is centered around the music and cultural hub of Egypt, more specifically, Cairo. German music theorist and musicologist, Alexander Rehding of Harvard University dubs this phenomenon, ‘Music-Historical Egyptomania’ within which, western cultures sought to uncover their perceived origins of Western musical traditions by tracing it to the foundational myth of Pythagorean principles which were predominantly thought to be the beginnings of music.⁶ Rehding explores early accounts of music theorists trying to make sense of the rich tapestry of intercultural musical exchange with a focus on the epistemological approach of discovering what musical innovations led to ‘western music.’ This exploration into the beginnings of musicology exemplifies the ideological gymnastics that early Western musical theorists had to go through to justify their perceived cultural superiority. Beginning with Athanasius Kircher’s 1650 publication *Musurgia Universalis*, Rehding demonstrates how the early field of musicology drew no separation between non-western cultures’ musical traditions. Kircher argues that when seeking the origins of music (“ante-diluvian”), an undeniable

⁶ Rehding, Alexander. “Music-Historical Egyptomania, 1650-1950.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 4 (2014): 545–80.

Sino-Egyptian association places Chinese music as the historical impetus for the Egyptians to apply mathematical structure later.

Early musicological scholarship often drew upon ancient Greek historical documentation to justify these claims. Primarily, musicologists drew upon the sources of Herodotus, Plato, and Diodorus who possessed a similar Orientalist preference for the perceived majesty and superiority of Western music by consistently claiming that Egyptians found music “useless” and often “harmful.”⁷ This assertion reaffirmed the Orientalist perspective of Western cultural hegemony and superiority which ultimately defined Western music’s self-perception as the supposedly ‘scientific’ and ‘mathematically proven’ form of artistic expression. This position was championed by the French musicologists of the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Guillaume-André Villoteau, and Belgian musicologists François-Joseph Fétis and his contemporary Raphael Gerog Kiewsewetter.

Kiewsewetter in his book on the relationship between ancient Greek and Egyptian music espoused the perspective that the extended musical scale of ‘Oriental’ cultures demonstrated an innate “regression into barbarism.”⁸ This extended musical scale is the ‘24-tone scale’ forming the basis for many musical cultures outside of the Occidental West. François-Joseph Fétis entertained this way of thinking when he described these extensions as “overburdened with ornaments,” and characterized them as “excessively ornate [and] rather strange” to the European ear.⁹

Musicologists did disagree with one another but only to the extent of arguing, how ‘distorted’ Egyptian music had become from the Western ideal of a 12-tone equal-tempered

⁷ Rehding, Alexander. “Music-Historical Egyptomania, 1650-1950.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 4 (2014)

⁸ Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, “Ueber die Musik der neueren Griechen nebst freien Gedanken über altegyptische und altgriechische Musik.” *Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig* 1838, 35.

⁹ Rehding, Alexander. “Music-Historical Egyptomania, 1650-1950.”

scale. Hans Hickmann, a German musicologist of the early 20th century entirely deviated from the ‘excessively ornate’ characterization and instead leaned into the idea that Egyptian music, and therefore Arab music and Oriental music as a demeaning umbrella category, was instead dominated by monotonous droning with nothing but simple rhythms and melodies.¹⁰ Suffice it to say, European musicologists had diverse views of the music of ‘the Orient’ but were all dominated by Orientalist ideals which sought to place all of musical culture on a chronological and evolutionary scale with European/Western music at the top.

Method

Concepts like this have attracted a few historians dedicating scholarship toward the epistemological study of how this evolutionary view finds its way into the musical world. Anas Ghrab, a scholar of Tunisian Historical Musicology at Université de Sousse, expands the concept of Orientalism to include a more biologically based understanding of how colonizers differentiated themselves from colonial subjects. In his essay published in *The World of Music*, Ghrab sees a pattern arise from the work of A.W. Ambros, a Czech musicologist writing in the 19th century, in which the music of Egyptians is characterized as a “distortion of Greek [western] music.”¹¹ Ghrab notes that Ambros supplements this claim by citing the ‘biological difference’ which causes a ‘degradation of culture.’¹² Ghrab also emphasizes the continuation and spread of this 19th-century conceptual process by invoking the writings of François-Joseph Fétis as noted above who claimed that Egyptian musicians played with the “wrong intonations,” a sentiment

¹⁰ Ibid.,

¹¹ Ghrab, Anas. “The Western Study of Intervals in ‘Arabic Music,’ from the Eighteenth Century to the Cairo Congress.” *The World of Music* 47, no. 3 (2005): 55–79.

¹² Ibid.,

shared by his contemporary Max Weber who stated that only Western musical cultures developed ‘harmonic music.’¹³

I would contend that to fully understand how deeply entrenched this biological understanding was in the European conceptualization of others, one must entertain the intertwined nature of this biological orientalism and the development of scientifically racist ideologies during the 19th century. Samuel Llano, a music and cultural historian at the University of Manchester, is a proponent of this conflation. While not specifically citing it as scientific racism, he notes a pivotal duality in the minds of colonial musicologists. The dualism he introduces is that between the perceived ‘Arab decay’ and ‘European modernity and science.’¹⁴ This duality introduces a key vantage point to discuss how European (specifically British) musicologists created cultural environments based on eugenic evolutionary ideologies to accentuate, personify, and sonify this perceived biological difference through physical spaces such as colonial hotels.

Hotels have become a topic of expertise and a window into the lives of colonists abroad for a lot of historians. Doctor Robert F Hunter provides a great overview of the kinds of British communities coming to Egypt during this time. Previously, the ideal tourist itinerary involved what was known as “The Grand Tour”: an excursion of British nobles to countries like France, Switzerland, Italy, and eventually Greece.¹⁵ Hunter argues that in Cairo, there became an expansion in the tourist population with the rise of the middle class: tourism became more affordable, conducted by professionals, and included tourists and ex-pats whose careers provided

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Llano, Samuel. “Empire, Diplomacy, and the Racial Imagination: Spain at the Cairo Congress of Arab Music (1932).” *The Journal of North African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2023): 589–634. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2089123>.

¹⁵ Hunter, F. Robert. “Tourism and Empire: The Thomas Cook & Son Enterprise on the Nile, 1868-1914.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (2004): 29

them with an idea of “work time” and “non-work time.”¹⁶ This fueled the rise of the modern equivalent of a travel agency in the form of *Thomas Cook & Son Enterprise* and the commodification of the travel and tourist industry. This company began through the workings of Thomas Cook in the mid-19th century, conducting tours of Europe with group rates, itineraries, and even resort visits. After attending the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Thomas Cook began the first of an ongoing tour of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria in the Spring of 1869.

The secret to understanding Cook & Son's success lies in their association with the advancing west, and specifically with British might. In regions such as the Middle East, a company's personal abilities, investment funds, and existing reputation could only take it so far. That being said, the energy, efficiency, organizational talents, and astuteness of its founders are not insignificant. A company also needs favorable circumstances to thrive brilliantly. Cook & Son would never have succeeded in establishing a tourism complex on the banks of the Nile without the backing of the most powerful nation in the world, the favors and patronage of a financially strapped Egyptian government that depended more and more on the European powers for its survival, and the profits and prestige that came with the extension of British imperial rule.¹⁷

Maurizio Peleggi a professor and researcher of cultural history at the National University of Singapore has conducted extensive research into the culture around British colonial hotels and tourist culture in Colombo and Singapore during the turn of the 20th century. Peleggi extends a general idea that these hotels served as, “comfort zones” as well as “contact zones.”¹⁸ These

¹⁶ Ibid., 29

¹⁷ Hunter, F. Robert. “Tourism and Empire: The Thomas Cook & Son Enterprise on the Nile, 1868-1914.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (2004): 33

¹⁸ Peleggi, Maurizio. “The Social and Material Life of Colonial Hotels: Comfort Zones as Contact Zones in British Colombo and Singapore, ca. 1870-1930.” *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (2012): 124–53.

zones that Peleggi introduces provided ex-pats and tourists with an oasis of familiarity, with British chefs, cuisine, music, architecture, and cultural events to bring these British travelers a little slice of home in a far-off land. The second element of Peleggi's argument is that these hotels simultaneously served as "contact zones" between the colonizing culture and the Indigenous population.¹⁹ In Singapore, Peleggi argues that these colonial hotels served as areas for cultural exchange despite being catered to the colonial audience seeking 'comfort' in a foreign country. This argument is pre-empted by the 'contact' between colonial ex-pats and the Indigenous labor forces who were employed by the British hotels.²⁰

This creates an inherent power imbalance which is transferable to the cultural relations between British hotels in Egypt and their Indigenous labor force however, I would hardly call this 'contact' in the sense that Peleggi means. His usage of 'contact' refers to the idea of cultural exchange and connection between colonists and indigenous communities.²¹ British hotels in Egypt certainly served as 'comfort zones' for British expatriates and tourists but there was little to no cultural exchange between colonists and Indigenous populations with the hotels implementing distinctly exclusionary policies concerning admittance to their events, particularly the music concerts, ball nights, and tea-filled terrace afternoons which were held in these hotels' ballrooms and audience halls, and constantly performed solely Western Music. The music itself thus becomes a central source of the 'comfort' provided by these colonial hotels, and therein, a window to study how British Cairene expats and tourists developed a distinct cultural identity separate from Egyptians and reaffirmed by domestic high-class British culture.

¹⁹ Ibid., 141-142

²⁰ Peleggi, Maurizio. "The Social and Material Life of Colonial Hotels: Comfort Zones as Contact Zones in British Colombo and Singapore, ca. 1870-1930." *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (2012) 146

²¹ Ibid., 143

Finally, back to Samuel Llano's 'arab decay'/'Western modernity' duality, this trope incessantly permeates through European conceptions of the East in nearly all disciplines. In tandem with this duality, Mary Louise Pratt, in her seminal work *Imperial Eyes*, provides an interdisciplinary explanation for where the sense of European superiority stems from. The term "anti-conquest" is used by Pratt to describe the way European travelers depicted themselves as benign observers and scientists, rather than conquerors, this rhetorical strategy allowed Europeans to claim moral high ground while still participating in and benefiting from imperialism.²² This 'anti-conquest' carried a veil of objectivity, which served to reaffirm European hegemony and Imperial dominance through virtually all modes of communication and representation throughout travel writing, in Pratt's case, and musical cultures in the case of British expats and tourists in Cairo. By observing, notating, and describing 'the other,' the Imperialist becomes knowledgeable, even an expert on the subject of their study.²³ This can be directly conflated with how British colonists in Egypt sought to define themselves as distinctly separate from indigenous Egyptians by cultivating a distinctly British 'comfort zone' within Cairo.

British colonial hotels served as 'comfort zones' which were carefully crafted through musical programming, they necessitated orientalizing to create a space of difference in which this identity could form. These spaces were instrumental in reinforcing European cultural hegemony while marginalizing indigenous Egyptian musical traditions, exemplifying how colonial encounters perpetuated divisions based on perceived musical and therefore cultural hierarchies. The rise of jazz concerts in the 1920s introduces an interesting contradiction in the

²² Mary Louise Pratt, "Narrating the anti-conquest" from *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge: 1992) 37-66

²³ *Ibid.*, 37-39

colonial mentality. Jazz music was, first off not British, but additionally, jazz was criticized in the same way that musicologists expressed a disdain for native Egyptian music: Modal harmonies, ornate embellishments, rhythmic intensity, and stylistic solo lines in unorthodox keys and modes. Despite this, jazz was celebrated and promoted as an emblem of European culture in Egypt simply for being non-Egyptian. I argue that through these means the hotel can be seen as more than just a ‘comfort’ zone or ‘contact’ zone. Instead, the culture sustained by programming of European classical music and juxtaposing it with Orientalist depictions of the Middle east, presents hotel auditory spaces as “Curated Zones.” These zones serve both functions of ‘comfort’ and ‘contact’ but all through the carefully crafted gaze of European naivete. Curated zones divided indigenous and settler identities through a much broader ‘non-Egyptian’ vs ‘Egyptian’ musical dichotomy, demonstrating the Orientalization necessary for the creation of ‘comfort’ in the colonial setting.

The Sphinx

The Music

In the earlier years of the Magazine, from 1892 to 1905, the music programmed into the cultural meetings of expats and tourists staying at the hotels tended to program foundational staples of European stylization in the music performed. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven were programmed into every late afternoon tea event.²⁴ Bach’s mathematical precision and musical meticulousness, represent a hallmark in the idea of music as an objective science with rights and wrongs, correct and incorrect progressions, and ornate melismatic runs. Mozart represents a

²⁴ *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library. 1892 - 1905

similar school of thought with very technical runs over the top of formulaic chords foundational to the later compositions of European composers. Programming past 1905 was constantly expanding, albeit, all within the reigns of European composers. Countless French, British, German, Italian, and Austrian composers flooded the scene

The colonial soundtrack outlined by “The Sphinx” can be separated into three main types of performances; First, hotel terrace tea performances, balls, and dances. Second, recitals by individual instrumentalists and music ensembles. Third, musical performances to accompany other significant cultural events (i.e. parades, Theodore Roosevelt’s visit to the hotels, golf outings, and fundraising events).²⁵

Grand swaths of the magazine focused on promoting the events being held in hotel ballrooms, concert halls, and particularly the Shepherd’s Hotel’s balcony and “Arab Hall.”²⁶ Weekly programming of “tea & music” events brought live music of British military bands and individual concert performers to the ears of British ex-pats, tourists, and upper-class Egyptians who could afford attendance. Bands included the Second Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers,²⁷ First Battalion King’s Royal Rifles,²⁸ First Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers,²⁹ and the Sixth Inniskilling Dragoons just to name a few.³⁰ These bands always performed a regimented program of songs from across Europe abiding by the following categorical descriptions: “March,” “Overture,” “Oriental Scene,” “Art Song Selection,” “Suite de Ballet,” “Valse,” and “Mazurka.”³¹ Finally, the band would finish their weekly concerts with a playing of a regimental

²⁵ “The Sphinx Vol 17 No 271, 1910,” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 7-11.

²⁶ The Sphinx (Multiple Volumes)

²⁷ “The Sphinx Vol 13 No 186, 1905,” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 7-8

²⁸ “The Sphinx Vol 13 No 189, 1905,” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5

²⁹ “The Sphinx Vol 14 No 201, 1906,” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5, 26.

³⁰ “The Sphinx Vol 14 No 202, 1906,” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5.

³¹ *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library.

march followed by the Khedivial Anthem before concluding with a performance of God Save The King.

First, to demonstrate how the European's perception of "The Orient" remained stagnant, we first must understand what Europe's view of itself existed as in the early 20th century. These hotel concerts were structured in such a way that sandwiched "Orientalist Music" between movements of 'high-class' European classical compositions. For instance let's take the program of Madame Bonucci-Carlesimo's afternoon Piano-Forte recital at the continental Savoy on Wednesday, January 10th, 1906. Starting of the recital, she performed "Gigue en Sol" by Scarlatti-Cesi. "Gigue en sol" (Gigue in G Major) exemplifies the Baroque dance form with its lively rhythms, binary structure, and engaging thematic material. The piece is characterized by energetic dotted rhythms, and syncopation, featuring scalar passages and arpeggios typical of Scarlatti's keyboard writing. Its compound meter, predominantly homophonic texture, and use of counterpoint add complexity and richness. The review in the Sphinx compliments how Mme. Carlesimo "showed a great purity of execution and knowledge of technique."³² However, beneath its surface, this music subtly promotes European hegemony and reaffirms European identity, presenting an idealized and superior cultural artifact that perpetuates the notion of European artistic dominance.

Following this dance, the recital shifted to a performance of "Theme en Fa" by Mozart. The piece opens with a balanced and symmetrical theme in F major, characterized by a lyrical melody and clear harmonic support revolving around tonic and dominant chords, setting the stage for a series of inventive variations. Each variation transforms the theme by altering aspects such as rhythm, harmony, texture, and dynamics, showcasing Mozart's versatility while maintaining the essence of the original theme. The rhythm of the theme is straightforward, with

³² "The Sphinx Vol 13 No 188, 1906" *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 8

regular patterns that emphasize natural phrasing, while variations introduce complex rhythms and syncopations. The texture is predominantly homophonic, but Mozart explores contrapuntal interplay, Alberti bass patterns, and thicker chordal textures in the variations. Performance practice requires a balanced tempo reflecting the character of each section, with articulation ranging from crisp staccato to smooth legato, and dynamic contrasts enhancing structural and emotional shifts. Ornamentation, though restrained, adds elegance and sophistication through tasteful trills and grace notes. "Theme en Fa" subtly reinforces the cultural dominance of European Classical music, perpetuating the notion of European artistic superiority through its elegance and sophistication and reaffirming the high-class European culture in these British colonial hotels.

After this, the program shifts to romantic era compositions presenting European music as everchanging and versatile. "Le Roi des Aulnes" or "Der Erlkönig" by Franz Schubert, composed in 1815 and based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem, stands as a quintessential example of Romantic lieder, delving into themes of the supernatural and psychological turmoil. Goethe's poem, tells the haunting tale of a father riding desperately through the night with his ailing child who perceives the spectral Erlking beckoning him to join his eerie ride. The piece opens with a haunting triplet motif in the piano, symbolizing the relentless gallop of a horse through a stormy night, while the vocal line, sung by the father narrating the story, shifts between recitative and aria-like passages to convey mounting tension. Harmonically, Schubert employs chromaticism and shifts in tonality, evoking the eerie and shifting moods of the poem. The rhythmic drive of the piano accompaniment, combined with syncopation and rubato, intensifies the urgency and instability of the narrative. Texturally, the song fluctuates between homophonic support and contrapuntal dialogue, heightening dramatic tension. Interpreting "Le Roi des

Aulnes" demands nuanced emotional expression and careful narrative shaping, with performers navigating dynamic contrasts and vocal coloration to depict the father's fear and despair as he witnesses his child's hallucinations of the Erlking. The piano, integral to creating an atmospheric backdrop and harmonic depth, requires precision in navigating the motif and highlighting thematic contrasts. Ultimately, Schubert's composition encapsulates the Romantic fascination with the supernatural, illustrating through music the psychological depth and dramatic tension of Goethe's poem, and reinforcing European music's adaptability and breadth in the exploration of human emotions and the mysterious allure of the unknown. This conception of European exceptionalism is later juxtaposed with the Orientalist music of European composers trying to portray the exoticism of the East.

The programs, following the sectional categories of "March," "Overture," "Oriental Scene," "Art Song Selection," "Suite de Ballet," "Valse," and "Mazurka," provide a framework from which the 'colonial soundtrack' would take shape in these Hotel's concert halls. Even just by taking these categories at face value, a general narrative begins to emerge. In line with Timothy Mitchell's foundational book *Colonizing Egypt*, we see 'The Orient' being idealized as an exotic exhibition with "Oriental Scene" serving as a section programmed into the concert for British attendees to marvel at this imagined musical space representing the East while in Egypt.³³ The composers featured in this recurring program note include Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells, and Gustave Holst: all English composers, one of which (Holst), composed his 'Orientalist' piece after a visit to Algeria.³⁴ This demonstrates the lumping together of European conceptions of 'the East,' 'the Orient,' and 'non-European' cultures into one general category

³³ Timothy Mitchell, "Egypt at the Exhibition" From *Colonizing Egypt*, (Cambridge University Press: 1988) 1-33.

³⁴ *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library.

simply representing ‘the other.’³⁵ Orientalist music utilized a combination of European music theory traditions to depict ‘The Orient’ in a digestible form for European audiences. Utilizing Modal tonalities, double harmonic and Phrygian scales, ornamentation, and repetitive rhythmic elements to portray the European perception of the East, notably, not the East itself. Following the methodology of Edward Said, the East that is presented through European Orientalist music is inherently unchanging, stuck in the past, and a distortion of the ‘Western’ standard.³⁶

Orientalist music is a consistent trope throughout the decades of music-filled tea parties and small dances but is sandwiched between the plethora of European Baroque, Classical, and Romantic era compositions performed in Hotel concert halls, grand ballrooms, and Egyptian Opera Halls. From Bach to Mozart and Scarlatti, to Beethoven and Liszt, to Wagner and Puccini, and eventually to dance nights being accompanied by jazz standards throughout the 1920s, the musical performances detailed in “The Sphinx” create a Soundtrack for upper-class expats and tourists seeking to comfort and reaffirm their own identity as Britain’s wealthiest.

This identity-building was inherently juxtapositional. For the British Cairenes to craft their own identity they needed to differentiate themselves from the Egyptian populace. A great deal of this relationship was bolstered by the performing of Orientalist pieces to ‘exhibit’ the East as a collective other, by grouping Egyptians with other countries and nations which Britain viewed as oppositional to themselves. To see this juxtaposition in action we can look at a concert held on December 8th, 1906 on the Sheppard’s Hotel terrace from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM.³⁷ The program followed the same structure as outlined previously with the “Oriental Scene” selected

³⁵ For more on Musical ‘Othering’ and musical utilization of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* see: Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, Vermont: 2008) AND Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon. *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East*. (Ashgate Publishing Limited, Vermont: 2007)

³⁶ Edward W Said, *Orientalism*. “Introduction,” (New York, Pantheon Books) 1978.

³⁷ “The Sphinx Vol 14 No 201, 1906.” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5

being “A Dervish Chorus” by Gabriel Sebek, a Czech composer.³⁸ This piece is a movement from his larger work *In The Soudan*.

Widely acclaimed by critics as an early promoter of the “Oriental Jazz” style, this piece was freshly composed in 1906 to transport the listener to a niche cultural tradition, from a European perspective. Dervishes are austere stoics who take vows of poverty and devotion to further their relationship with God. The Dervish traditions of chanting and dancing dominated European fascinations of ‘the Orient,’ symbolizing the mysticism and exoticism that permeated through centuries of European ideation about what they perceived as ‘backward’ or ‘primitive.’ This is demonstrated in the piece by portraying a very simplistic but rhythmic sound with one melodic thread continuing throughout the piece. The “Dervish Chorus” utilized the Phrygian mode, a staple of the Orientalist genre, to try and represent Islamic Soudanese culture in a European mode, and present it to a British audience in Cairo. Pieces like this reaffirmed British identity because the attendees could conflate the familiar and ‘refined’ sound of Mozart, Beethoven, etc... with the otherworldly, strange, and uncomfortable sound of ‘the Orient’ without needing to properly portray Sudanese music. Orientalist music can thus be seen as a mode of creating a comfort and contact zone simultaneously as it is rehashing cultural traditions and music from non-European groups and producing music that portrays it from a European perspective for a European audience. This creates an aura of familiarity while still exhibiting the exotic, a thread that appears constantly throughout concerts held at the hotels.

Following the Oriental Scene, a piece by Gustav Theodore Michaelis, a German Composer, was programmed.³⁹ His “Turkish Patrol,” originally composed in 1879, is meant to depict the passing of an Ottoman police regiment. This piece follows a similar line to Sebek’s

³⁸ Ibid., 5

³⁹ “The Sphinx Vol 14 No 201, 1906” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5

by representing Europeans' perceptions of Ottoman culture. "Turkish Patrol" sounds entirely Western and has similarities to other European compositions representing Turkish culture such as Mozart's "Rondo alla Turca." While decidedly Western in intonation and rhythm, the light dash of occasional ornamentation with rolled grace notes and accidentals create just enough 'other-ness' to deem it "Turkish" or at least, perceived by Europeans as 'accurately' representing Turkish or Ottoman culture.

Concerts such as these happened every week, sometimes twice a week, with each hotel having its version of tea and music in the late afternoon.⁴⁰ With each performance, "Orientalist" music was sandwiched between European art songs and symphonic movements further juxtaposing the "Arab decay" and "European modernity" dichotomy.

Just the next week, on December 15, 1906, The Shepheard's hotel hosted the band of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons who performed a wide set of repertoire.⁴¹ Once again, consistent throughout there are Orientalist trope pieces as well as Western kinds of music and ballets set in 'Oriental' scenes. On the Shephead's hotel terrace, the band played selections from "Madame Butterfly" by Puccini. This Opera was set in Nagasaki Japan and represents the total abstraction at play in the minds of Europeans to the point where 'Oriental Scenes' became a catch-all category for music representing or set in any non-European nation. This follows in line with many European trends to conflate itinerant and 'exoticized' populations under the vague veil category of 'Oriental.'

Following the excerpt from "Madame Butterfly," the program states that the band played "Danse de la Gypsy," a movement from Camille Saint-Saëns' Ballet Henry VIII.⁴² This piece

⁴⁰ *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* (Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1892-) Accessed via American University at Cairo: Rare books and Special Collections Digital Library.

⁴¹ "The Sphinx Vol 14 No 202, 1906" *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 5

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5

utilized many similar tropes with a simplistic yet ‘melodically foreign’ main theme utilizing accidentals and ornamentation within the Phrygian mode. This piece is a pivotal moment in the opera as Henry VIII planned several events to entertain his royal court, reveling in the exotic and the exhibition of Egyptian culture and dances. This “Danse de la Gypsy” falls within a broader historical context of Henry VIII during the 16th century. In 1530, Henry VIII signed the first of several Egyptian Acts, also known as the "Acts Concerning Egyptians." This act represents a significant early legal measure aimed at controlling the Romani people, who were referred to as "Egyptians" due to the mistaken belief about their origins, as well as other itinerant groups.⁴³ In the early 16th century, England, like much of Europe, viewed these groups with suspicion and mistrust, considering them a threat to social order and economic stability. The act mandated the expulsion of all "outlandish people calling themselves Egyptians" within sixteen days of its proclamation, with non-compliance resulting in imprisonment and forfeiture of goods.⁴⁴ It also prohibited their entry into England, treating those who entered as felons and penalized English subjects who consorted with or supported the Romani, imposing fines and imprisonment.⁴⁵ Although the act's enforcement was likely inconsistent, it set a precedent for further anti-Romani legislation and simultaneously anti-Egyptian sentiment, such as the more stringent 1554 act, which imposed the death penalty on Romani individuals who did not leave England. This legislation reflects the broader societal prejudices and fears of the time, illustrating the government's attempts to regulate and marginalize itinerant populations.

The term "Egyptians" for the Romani reflects a Western tendency to exoticize and misidentify groups considered foreign, the same way Orientalist perspectives view Eastern

⁴³ Nandini Das, João Vicente Melo, Haig Z. Smith, and Lauren Working. “Gypsy.” In *Keywords of Identity, Race, and Human Mobility in Early Modern England*, 125–30. (Amsterdam University Press, 2021) 127

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 127-128

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128

cultures. This act sought to control and expel a group seen as different and threatening to societal norms, mirroring the Orientalist notion of the East as a place of danger and moral corruption needing management or containment with their music and culture embodying 'backwardness' or 'primitivity'. The legislation involved ethnic and cultural stereotyping, akin to how Orientalism creates simplified and often negative stereotypes of Eastern societies. Additionally, the Egyptian Act institutionalized the marginalization and persecution of the Romani, reflecting a broader pattern of using legal frameworks to enforce ethnic and cultural hierarchies. Thus, while the act specifically targeted the Romani people, its principles of exoticizing, marginalizing, and controlling those deemed 'other' resonate with the themes of Orientalism, both reflecting a Western-centric worldview that seeks to define and dominate what it perceives as foreign or exotic.

Returning to the movement from Saint-Saëns' Henry VIII, "Danse de la Gypsy" demonstrates prejudices that resonated through the centuries and were revitalized in the upper-class hotel culture of colonial hotels in Egypt in the 20th century. In "The Sphinx" we see a continuation of these racist and Orientalist ways of thinking repackaged as high-class British culture. Instead of ousting itinerant populations, which they mistook as Egyptians, British expats are placing the 'exotic' on display and repurposing the century-old xenophobic sentiment that fueled the colonial culture within these hotels by filling the actual auditory space with the sound legacy of Orientalist racism. By sandwiching Orientalist movements such as this between European high-class music, "The Sphinx" demonstrates how the Arab decay and European modernity dichotomy was fully displayed through colonizing auditory spaces within these hotels. Orientalist music represents a sort of 'comfortable contact' for Europeans staying in these hotels by providing the guise of exoticism and connecting with other cultures, however, all through the

purview of European composers and through auditory spaces that Europeans could understand and recognize. This minor form of ‘comfortable contact’ was overshadowed by the much larger amounts of European ‘comfort’ music performed, demonstrating the reality of the ‘curated zones’ of these hotels’ auditory spaces. It served the purpose of recreating a European auditory space in Egypt, thus reifying their own high-class European identity. The musical programming didn’t single-handedly exhibit this sentiment but worked in tandem with how “The Sphinx” writers, editors, and music critics depicted the performances.

The Reviews

A crucial aspect of “The Sphinx” is the continuous utilization of musical and aesthetic rhetoric which emphasizes the Arab decay/European modernity dichotomy. This is brought to prominence by the few but heavily emphasized instances when an Indigenous band or composer would perform at a recital hall or special events held at the hotels. The edition published on December 2, 1905, depicts the plethora of events held throughout Cairo for Eid al-Fitr, or the “Festival of breaking the fast” held at the end of the month of Ramadan. In a recurring section titled “Matters of interest to ladies,” the writers depict celebrations at the Ezbekiyya Gardens. The gardens originally spanned 20 acres between the Khedivial, Eden Palace, Bristol, and Continental-Savoy Hotels as well as the Khedivial Opera House. The area surrounding these gardens serves as the general physical auditory space occupied by European tourists and British expats.

In addition to descriptions of flag-lined and lantern-lit streets with a “crowd of interested spectators of varying shades of complexion,” the writers include mentions of the music being performed in the gardens stating, “bands played and native music added to the general noise.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “The Sphinx Vol 13 No 182, 1905” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 19

By equivocating native music to ‘general noise’ we see a hint of the prejudice existent throughout the magazines and the utilization of the Arab decay/European modernity dichotomy. The subverting of indigenous Egyptian musical cultures was foundational to the identity-building of British expats and hotel culture in Egypt. When European classical music was performed, critics dedicated entire columns of “The Sphinx” to breaking down their performance and bolstering the grandiose aura of the European auditory space. This is quickly flipped whenever the magazine mentions performances of native music and even Egyptians interacting with European culture.

On March 3, 1906, in a section titled “Woman’s World in Egypt,” the author (simply listed as N.G.) describes a performance and dance night held at the Ghezireh Palace Hotel.⁴⁷ This opinion piece provides a peek into the mind of a European and their absolute fascination with exoticism and the idea of native women interacting with and witnessing European culture. The author writes:

I wonder if the two closely veiled figures in black who sat apart and made no attempt to join in the dancing were only masqueraders; or whether they were really native ladies who had crept in for once to watch the Western world enjoying itself. I would have given much to see the scene through their dark eyes and to have followed the thoughts within their brains. It is so hard to focus on things when once accustomed to them but the unbiassed impressions of a European fantasia by those harem ladies would be worth having...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “The Sphinx Vol 13 No 195, 1906” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 25

⁴⁸ “The Sphinx Vol 13 No 195, 1906” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 25

With European music on full display, the author provides a prime example of the Arab decay/European modernity dichotomy dominating the European fascination of ‘The Orient’ and ‘The Exotic.’ Their words depict direct contact between native Egyptians and European culture, a junction that appears seemingly unfathomable to a European. The author's account is predicated by a sense of European exceptionalism defined entirely by the music and culture of dancing within this auditory space. This moment represents one of the few times when Indigenous Egyptians and the high-class exclusionary culture of the hotels came into contact, and it is memorialized through the curated zone reality of nostalgia, British Caireens having attended these music and dance nights countless times. The author reflects on how they miss out on the truly majestic nature of the event because they have grown so accustomed to it. For the author, the native ladies represent nothing but the unbridled potential of those who have yet to witness ‘civilization’ or ‘high class’ demonstrating just how foundational music and musical cultures like dancing were to the British expat identity while abroad in Egypt. It became a mode of reifying their own Britishness and reestablishing their own perceived superiority over the Egyptian culture they were colonizing.

Very few references to Egyptian attendance at these events exist outside the continuous attendees from the upper-class English-speaking Egyptian elite. There were however several performances held for an Egyptian Military Police Band. The band's repertoire and actual pieces performed were not listed except for when two pipers were borrowed from the Egyptian battalion to perform with the hotel band of The Grand Hotel in Khartoum Sudan. This is notable as Sudan was under a unique colonial arrangement known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Officially established in 1899, the Condominium stipulated that Sudan would be jointly administered by Britain and Egypt. However, in practice, Britain held the dominant position in

the administration and control of Sudan.⁴⁹ The Governor-General of Sudan was a British appointee, and British officials held most key administrative and military positions. Egyptian officials had a limited presence, and their influence was marginal compared to that of the British.⁵⁰ This is exemplified by the prominence of British colonial hotels in Khartoum and a reappearance of the same upper-class, exclusive, culture of European exceptionalism found in Cairo.

In an issue of “The Sphinx” published March 26, 1921, the authors describe a musical performance held at The Grand Hotel on March 17th. In a section titled, “The failures,” the author describes two pipers from an Egyptian battalion that joined the two British bands. In their first performance at a golf exhibition match for hotel patrons, the article rhetorically positions the piper’s “rude music in the still hot air” as being a nuisance to the European golfers and an assault on their nerves.⁵¹ This was offset by a well-received performance later in the day back at The Grand Hotel following the match which the author still turns into a note of degradation for the Egyptian performers claiming, “at last the British ear has become susceptible to the charm of Egyptian Music.”⁵² While following the same tropes of Orientalist exoticization of Egyptian cultures, this provides a very specific intersection of the arab decay/European modernity dichotomy and the concept of “curated zones” in that these pipers, despite performing Western music with an entirely Western band are somehow interrupting the ‘curated-zone’ of the British hotel’s western auditory space simply by being Egyptian. Further demonstrating how deeply intertwined musical cultures were with reifying the British identity in a colonial setting, this

⁴⁹ Gabriel Warburg. “The Wingate Literature Revisited: The Sudan as Seen by Members of the Sudan Political Service during the Condominium: 1899-1956.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 3 (2005): 374-375

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 375-276

⁵¹ “The Sphinx Vol 28 No 462, 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 20

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20

excerpt exposes how even the performance of music was predicated by racial connotations. The Egyptians, by performing Western music with the bands were perceived as somehow distorting the grandiose European culture. Instead of being recognized for their performance, as they were by the audience, the author memorializes the Egyptian pipers' playing as a degrading perversion of what they believed to be high-class, refined culture. This sentiment is summarized in the utilization of "the failures" to headline this section of "The Sphinx" takes, what was a well-received performance, and shows the rewriting of the historical record to further draw a divide between British ex-pats and tourists and the Egyptian populace. This division relies on the arab decay/European modernity dichotomy to define the European expat's identities concerning the distortion that is portrayed in the reviews of Egyptian musicians performing European music.

A more direct dehumanization of Egyptian music and culture can be seen in the multiple performances from the Hirsch Quartette, most being held at the National Hotel. This group quickly became a staple of the hotel scene in Cairo with their recitals selling out all over and building up a dedicated fan base of expats and tourists staying in these British hotels. On Thursday, December 8th, 1921, the Hirsch quartette began one of their many tours of the colonial hotels with most features in the National Hotel, they began back in 1919, making this their third Cairo tour. In a section of "The Sphinx" titled "Musical Matters" the author describes the phenomenal musical talent demonstrated by the quartette but what stands out is the rhetoric attributed to their role in the broader Cairene music scene. The author writes, "They are known among all music-lovers in Cairo as having created real oases in the artistic desert during the past-two winters."⁵³ What is so interesting in particular here is the sheer dehumanization of Egyptian culture and the simultaneous promotion of European exceptionalism specifically through the auditory spaces that the hotel patrons are inhabiting. The description of Cairo's musical scene as

⁵³ "The Sphinx Vol 29 No 467 1921" *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 27

an ‘artistic desert’ strips Egyptians of their own musical cultures and instead provides the perspective that the only correct form of musical expression is that which was introduced and upheld by British colonists.

This is further exemplified by looking at the music which the Hirsch quartette commonly performed. The recital on December 8th, 1921 concluded with Pizzetti’s Quartette in A Major and Beethoven’s Quartette in E Major (op. 74) demonstrative of a commitment to the performance of European composers and reification of high-class British cultures.⁵⁴ The article includes the promotion of a Bach Festival being hosted by the Hirsch Quartette on January 4th, 1922, further solidifying the music representing the soundtrack of class and civilization in these colonial auditory spaces. Furthermore, accompanying the countless works of Bach that would be performed, the magazine advertises the performance of compositions by Debussy and Ravel.⁵⁵ The rhetoric used to describe the performances of the Hirsch Quartette further the Arab Decay/European Modernity divide by further bolstering the sense of refinement and class that was associated with Western styles of music. This is accompanied by a simultaneous stripping of any sort of valid indigenous musical culture, leaving the only remaining auditory spaces deserving of respect from the colonists to be that of the ‘curated zones’ they were creating with the programming of Western musical styles.

The Epistles of Peggy and the Roaring 20s in Cairo

Neglect toward Indigenous musical cultures is a constant trope utilized by the authors of “The Sphinx.” One of the most interesting places where musical and aesthetic rhetoric is utilized the most often is in a narrative opinion piece called “The Epistles of Peggy.” Peggy is a British

⁵⁴ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 467 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 27

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27

expat/tourist living in Cairo during the early 20th century, these articles take the form of her letters back to her husband in England.⁵⁶ She describes the events and culture around the hotels and in particular, utilizes music and aesthetic means of description and argumentation which further propagate the Arab Decay/European Modernity dichotomy. Peggy fundamentally ‘others’ indigenous cultures through the promotion of British culture, establishing yet another ‘curated zone’ which is fascinatingly musical.

“The Epistles of Peggy,” first and foremost, were targeted toward “tourists and intelligent travelers,” thus removing them from any possibility of Egyptian influence or even interaction.⁵⁷ One of the first-ever entries in this series of Peggy’s is the declaration that British hotel goers and expatriate patrons are “unanimous in condemning Cairo’s dance music as being almost antediluvian.”⁵⁸ This harkens back to the initially established “Egyptomania” which dominated the European fascination not only with Egyptian culture, geography, and history but particularly with Egyptian musical cultures and the history of music itself. By looking into the history of music in Egypt, European scholars legitimately thought they were looking at their own society’s past, which leads us to an interesting contradiction in the Arab decay/European modernity dichotomy.

In critic reviews and published articles, Egyptian music is consistently written off as not abiding by Western or ‘regular’ rules of harmony. This, in turn, is used to further promote Egyptian music as somehow less evolved and a more ‘historic’ version of what would eventually become Western European music. This in and of itself is contradicted in “The Epistles of Peggy” when she is invoking a sense of nostalgia around the performing of jazz music and the dancing that ensues. The jazz music became a source of individual identity building for the hotel patrons

⁵⁶ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 468 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 14-16

⁵⁷ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 468 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 14-16

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14

attending these concerts and dance nights. Peggy described the auditory space as being filled with, “the joyous jazz that we in Cairo still affect as the dance music par excellence.”⁵⁹ Jazz can be seen becoming a central feature of how British expats and tourists differentiated their own identity from the Egyptians they were colonizing. Peggy supplements this by reminiscing on the bleak world before jazz music filled the hotels writing, “We must have been barbarians to have suffered it in silence so long and so lightheartedly... [That] we critical Caire-enes still suffer it... in the matter of the music that is ‘done.’ This is a nasty setback to our pride.”⁶⁰

Remarkably, it is with jazz music that we see contradictions arise. Peggy clearly states that jazz defies the regular rules of harmony, however, being a Western musical form, jazz bypasses this distinction and additionally supports the general Western ‘comfort zone’ of these hotels’ auditory spaces. Being just different enough, jazz can be seen as an extension of Orientalist music’s ‘comfortable contact’ where the music being added to the space is different enough to invoke some sense of interest but also notably Western to provide an abstracted view of whatever ‘other’ the composer wants to invoke. Jazz is slightly different from the direct portrayal of ‘the other’ which Orientalist music provides ample instances of. Instead, jazz became the heart and soul of the British Caireen community, filling the auditory spaces of these hotels with a sound that colonists themselves thought defined their new life and new culture in Cairo.

In 1920s Cairo, jazz became the new ‘sound of refinement’ and received attention from critics and columnists as a distinctly British element of these auditory spaces. On Christmas Eve 1921, Peggy describes the music of Cairo’s new amateur jazz band and their performance at the Shephard’s hotel. The band is rhetorically positioned as being on a ‘mission to humanity...

⁵⁹ Ibid.,

⁶⁰ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 468 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 14

Freeing our foxtrot from the shackles of monotonous music.”⁶¹ Interestingly enough, the history of European classical and romantic music is fading fast. Later, in a later 1921 edition, writing about New Year's Eve Festivities on December 31st, 1921, Peggy comments on the aforementioned Hirsch Quartette's Bach festival being held at the Continental-Savoy.⁶² This festival had record-low turnouts with later editions commenting on the decreased interest in recital and concert hall-style performances. Peggy attributes this to a combination of four causes: First, a clashing of dates between different recitals across the city. Second, a clashing of the times of the recitals as well making it impossible to go to multiple. Third, a lack of proper publicity and attention that was previously given to these concerts in “The Sphinx.” Fourth and finally, Peggy places blame on general financial stringency citing that concerts used to always be on Sundays, now they are during the week and previous attendees simply cannot attend now.⁶³

Despite reminiscing on the ‘good old days’ of the classical music concerts, Peggy remains steadfast in the assertion that this is “not a death of good music in the Capital” but rather a rebranding and expansion of British Caireen identity to be partially redefined by the jazz music now occupying auditory space in these hotels. Peggy demonstrates how jazz came to define British colonial identity stating, “Surprising, isn't it, that we English who apparently don't know how to dance can yet produce the best dance music done!”⁶⁴ This ‘English-ness’ that came to be associated with the jazz music being performed also developed a similar aura of exclusivity similar to the classical music concerts, as a demonstration of civilization and authority in the region. Peggy introduces a hierarchical classed element to jazz dance attendance, commenting, “We don't hear [jazz] in public places or at dances frequented by the foul multitude.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 469, 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 239 (15)

⁶² “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 470, 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 282 (22)

⁶³ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 471, 1922” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 306 (12)

⁶⁴ “The Sphinx Vol 29 No 470, 1921” *The Sphinx: English Illustrated Weekly* 274-275 (14-15)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 274-275 (14-15)

It is noteworthy that jazz is being reutilized to define British Caireen identity despite the genre having next to nothing to do with “English-ness.” The jazz tradition developed in the late 19th, and early 20th century United States as a blending of various musical traditions, including African rhythms, European harmonic structures, and American blues. Jazz became defined by call-and-response elements as well as a general practice of improvisation. In addition, jazz represented a break from European harmonic tradition with a broader interpretation of what ‘worked’ harmonically and the utilization of the blues scale and twelve-bar structure. The societal contexts that gave rise to jazz culture such as New Orleans working-class life as well as The Great Migration and Harlem Renaissance contributed to new American identities and a musical genre to explore the lives and cultures of the subaltern and otherwise unheard class. In this sense, jazz and indigenous Egyptian music seem to have more in common than jazz does with European classical music. American jazz popularized itself by being rooted in the musicians themselves, inviting more collaboration and looser interpretations of ‘musical rules.’ Jazz, in the American sense, is staunchly anti-hierarchical. This betrays how it was utilized in the colonial hotel space as a means to reintroduce exclusivity and reify ‘Britishness’ through the colonization of auditory space.

Regardless of its contradictions, around 1920, this shift to jazz music came with a need to redefine British Caireen identity due to the fact that as the classical music concert hall nights were becoming more inclusive, in a sense, the British and Egyptian musical cultures came to a close. Jazz served as a means to redefine the British identity solely by ‘Western’ distinctions. Jazz was Western and therefore was seen as closely related to the ‘classical’ with a return to exclusivity and an individualized auditory space specifically for British expats and tourists which differentiated their sensorial world from indigenous Egyptians. Furthermore, the contrast with

'Orientalist' music still continued with many recitals now hosting entire sets of Orientalist music. For instance, on New Year's Eve 1921, between two jazz sets intended for dancing, the Continental-Savoy's amateur jazz band performed an entire set of "Oriental Suites." These included Gustave Holst's "Beni Mora" (Composed after a trip to Algiers,) Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," and Herbert Howell's "Puck's Minuet."

Orientalist music, again characterized by its fascination with exoticism and the portrayal of 'otherness,' played a significant role in European classical music, reflecting a broader cultural trend of romanticizing and mystifying the East. This fascination is evident in works such as Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," which, though rooted in English Renaissance tradition, exemplifies how Western composers integrated modal and harmonic elements to evoke a sense of timelessness and spiritual depth. Vaughan Williams' use of the Phrygian mode, characterized by a flattened second-scale degree, imbues the piece with an archaic sound. This mode, along with frequent modal interchange and the use of the Dorian mode, enriches the harmonic color and emotional depth of the work. The intricate polyphony and the use of parallel motion in fourths, fifths, and octaves create a spacious, open sound, while quartal harmony and drones contribute to a mystical and transcendent quality, highlighting the Orientalist's element of fusing perceived 'ancient musical traditions' with what Europeans understood as 'modern sensibilities'.

Similarly, Herbert Howells' "Puck's Minuet" reflects a blend of whimsy and ancient charm through his preference for modal harmony. The piece prominently features the Mixolydian mode, providing a bright yet slightly quirky quality fitting for Puck, the mischievous fairy from Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" set in Athens Greece. Howells' use of modal interchange, quartal harmony, and non-functional harmonic progressions adds harmonic

interest and unpredictability, creating a sense of openness and spontaneity. Parallel motion in thirds and sixths enhances the fluidity of the harmonic progression, while chromaticism introduces tension and color, enriching the playful and capricious character of the piece. The textural variations and interplay between different voices add depth to the harmonic landscape, showcasing Orientalists' tendencies to blend sophistication with charm and mystery of the perceived 'Orient'.

Gustav Holst's "Beni Mora," inspired by his travels in Algeria, exemplifies the incorporation of non-Western musical elements into Western composition, a hallmark of Orientalist music. Holst employs exotic scales and modes derived from Middle Eastern music, including the Phrygian mode. Ostinato patterns and repetitive motifs, particularly in the third movement, create a hypnotic effect reminiscent of traditional Middle Eastern melodies and were meant to invoke European fascination. Harmonic elements such as drones and pedal points evoke the sustained pitches typical of Eastern music, providing a stable foundation for modal melodies. Holst's use of parallel harmony, non-functional harmonic progressions, and whole-tone scales further enhances the exotic feel of the music, drawing from tropes often used to portray the Middle East. The polyphonic texture and Impressionistic influences, including extended harmonies and unresolved dissonances, contribute to the suite's atmospheric and evocative sound, transporting listeners to the vibrant and mysterious landscapes of North Africa.

This shift that is seen in Egypt, from the most popular form of musical event transitioning from the classical concert hall experience to a roaring 20s-era bustling jazz night scene, further solidifies the Arab Decay/European modernity dichotomy at play in the colonial hotel scene. European culture is portrayed as evolving and developing into a new British Cairen identity. Meanwhile, 'the Orient,' or the perceived culture of the Middle East through Western

representation, remains stagnant and unchanging. This leads to further implications that it wasn't the musical stylings or aesthetics at all that determined 'superior' vs 'inferior' ideations for the British Caireen identity but instead the ceaseless juxtapositional relationship between colonists and Indigenous Egyptians.

Egyptian music was degenerate solely because it was composed and performed by Egyptians. Even though jazz music defied existing boundaries of high-class music with modal and harmonic shifts away from the 'classical' European standard, the same deviations from the 'standard' are what was rhetorically weaponized to dehumanize and subjugate indigenous Egyptian soundscapes, this places musical cultures on a rigid and complex hierarchy between what was heard as arab decay or stagnant and unchanging culture and the European modernity of evolving and shifting musical cultures. By portraying British colonists as capable of changing musical tastes and evolving their class rituals of ballroom nights, tea and music afternoons, refined recital performances, and eventually innovative jazz dance nights, "The Sphinx" demonstrates how British colonists in Egyptian hotels created a new British Caireen identity by differentiating their own "British" auditory spaces from the "artistic desert" of Cairo. This differentiation and musical othering prove foundational to establishing colonial identities within these hotel spaces and other colonial institutions. Outside of the hotel space, the colonists continued to discuss auditory spheres and musical cultures. Music was exponentially used by colonists as a cultural measure of 'otherness' even in scientific and academic societies established by the colonial order.

Possession of Music and Scale

The Cairo Scientific Society, an institution established in 1898 with intent to be a 'society for the Promotion of Science in Egypt', served as a hub for European intellectuals and scholars in

Egypt. It provided a platform for disseminating and reinforcing European cultural and intellectual superiority. This society exemplified how European powers sought to assert dominance not only through territorial conquest but also through cultural and intellectual colonization. As a contemporary of "The Sphinx," the activities and lectures held at the Cairo Scientific Society often propagated Eurocentric views, further entrenching the dichotomy between European modernity and Middle Eastern stagnation. As another colonial body and representative of how Europeans, particularly British expats, carried themselves in the colonial space, the Cairo Scientific Society also contributed to the British Caireen sense of self and provided rhetorical clues as to how colonists developed their colonial identity, particularly through musical and aesthetic modes of expression.

Much like the themes discussed in "The Sphinx" about British expatriate identity in Cairo, we see the intellectual and musical spheres being used to reinforce this identity through hierarchical structuring of auditory spheres being presented through perceived 'objective truth' at the Cairo Scientific Society. In a 1923 lecture titled "A New Musical Temperament," delivered by E.B.H. Wade M.A., we see European colonization extend not just to territories and cultures but also to the very musical scales that defined 'Oriental' music in the European cultural zeitgeist, particularly the 24-tone scale and the Phrygian and double harmonic modes. Wade claims to have pioneered this school of thought through experiments with various musical scales, including 17, 19, and 24-tone scales, which they assert to have developed independently. This appropriation of musical innovation serves to bolster a British Caireen identity that prides itself on cultural and intellectual superiority over the supposedly stagnant Middle East.

Wade initially presents an aesthetic approach to this 'New Musical Temperament,' stating, "The clever painter uses few colours and makes them seem many. The good dramatist does not

introduce more characters than are barely necessary to unfold his story.”⁶⁶ This minimalist aesthetic ultimately reaffirms Western 12-tone equal temperament as the dominant, aesthetically superior scale, underpinned by Orientalist undertones. Wade dismissively states, “I do not get satisfaction from music in which the perfect fifth is lacking.”⁶⁷ By doing so, Wade reinforces the notion that European musical structures are inherently superior, further entrenching the dichotomy of European modernity versus Arab decay.

What is most striking about Wade’s lecture is the absence of any mention of 'Oriental' music, despite its historical allure to musicologists. Instead, Wade presents the 24-tone scale as their own original work, disregarding the fact that this scale was already a fundamental part of Egyptian music. Throughout the lecture, Wade references only Western composers and theorists, such as Signor Busoni and Dr. Eaglefield Hull’s *Modern Harmony* who proposed a possible 18-note scale, in addition to another Italian composer whom E.B.H Wade neglects to formally mention citing, “owing to the loss of a reference, I am unable to give his name.”⁶⁸ While failing to acknowledge any indigenous influences, this erasure of Middle Eastern contributions underscores a British Caireen identity that positions itself as the originator and innovator of musical knowledge, able to evolve and change, This contrasts sharply with the depiction of the Middle East as culturally and intellectually stagnant.

“Orientalist” music gets written off as Europe’s own original work and ideation; portraying in a Western- light, the music of Egypt at the time, a great deal of which utilized the 24-tone musical scale that Wade is presenting as their own. This focus on European advancement in musical knowledge exemplifies the lack of cross-cultural exchange in European academic

⁶⁶ E. B. H. Wade M.A. “A New Musical Temperment: lecture delivered before the Cairo Scientific Society” *Cairo: Al Mokattam Printing Office, 1923-1924*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,

institutions in Cairo during the colonial period. When discussing Debussy, Wade omits his inspiration from Indonesian Gamelan music, attributing his innovations solely to the evolution of Western musical scales. This selective acknowledgment of musical influences serves to further the narrative of European cultural superiority, suggesting that true innovation can only come from within the European context. This erasure of indigenous musical traditions results in a form of intellectual colonization, where Western academics appropriate and rebrand existing musical knowledge without acknowledging its true origins, thereby reinforcing a British identity that is seen as dynamic and progressive.

The lecture concludes with a discussion on implementing the 24-tone scale on the piano, symbolizing the appropriation of Egyptian music into a European model. This act represents the co-opting of musical traditions, styles, and nuances, stripping them from their cultural context and repurposing them for Western consumption. By doing so, European intellectuals solidify their own sense of cultural superiority and modernity, reinforcing a British Caireen identity that thrives on the rhetorical juxtaposition to a stagnant and unchanging portrayal of the Middle East. This brings a new understanding to the 'Curated zones' of the hotels as European academics were essentially codifying 'Arab scales and modes' as their own, furthering the sense of possession that Europe had over the ideological and musical output of the Orient.

This narrative of musical advancement not only devalues the cultural heritage of the region but also serves to define British Caireen identity in contrast to indigenous cultures. The British Caireen identity becomes one of innovation and refinement, tied to seemingly 'objective' institutions like a science society. This identity is primarily defined by its juxtaposition against a supposedly static and inferior Middle Eastern culture. This portrayal not only devalues the rich

musical traditions of the Middle East but also strengthens the British Caireen identity defined by the 'curated zones' of British auditory spaces.

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