

# Music Criticism and the *Exposition Internationale Universelle de 1900* \*

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What people ... do in such a fair is to stroll, to be a *flâneur*, and what they stroll between are signs of different cultures. Therefore, whether they are locals or visitors from outside the city hosting the fair, they are acting as tourists, gazing upon the signs of different cultures. People can do in an afternoon what otherwise takes a lifetime: gaze upon and collect signs of dozens of different cultures—the built environment, cultural artefacts, meals and live, ethnic entertainment.<sup>1</sup>

From 14 April to 12 November 1900 Paris hosted the largest international exposition ever seen up to that time. Just under fifty-one million visitors came to ‘tour the world’ via the exhibits of more than forty nations. The French government wanted the visitors to take home an appreciation of the host nation—respect for her culture (the *âme française*) and for her political might (manifested in the colonial empire)—as well as an understanding of artistic and technological progress of the previous century. Tourists, both French and foreign, would have the opportunity to compare the exhibits of participating nations and in this way establish relative rankings.<sup>2</sup> And so a splendid retrospective art exhibit and an extensive series of concerts surveyed the French tradition in the arts while the impressive pavilions of the French colonies in Southeast Asia, Africa and North Africa attested to the nation’s wealth and power as well as her genius for administration and education.<sup>3</sup> In the theatres attached to these pavilions indigenous peoples provided live ethnic entertainment for the *flâneurs*.<sup>4</sup>

The *Exposition* was also a grand amusement park with shopping, restaurants and popular diversions. Commercial ventures featured jugglers and contortionists, carnival-type rides, and

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\* Parts of this paper were delivered in an earlier version at the international colloquium, ‘From Musical Exoticism to World Music’ in July 2000 at City University of London. I would like to thank William Malm, J. Scott Miller, James Brandon, Sandra Davis and Yoko Kurokawa for sharing their expertise and materials on Japanese music.

<sup>1</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1990) 153.

<sup>2</sup> For parallel examples in the same period, see Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World’s Fair* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1967) 66, 120.

<sup>4</sup> For information on displaying people at world’s fairs, see Burton Benedict, ‘Rituals of Representation: Ethnic Stereotypes and Colonized Peoples at World’s Fairs,’ *Fair Representations: World’s Fairs and the Modern World*, ed. Robert W. Rydell and Nancy E. Gwinn (Amsterdam: VU UP, 1994) 28–61. Benedict proposes three modes of display: people and their artefacts as curiosities, people as artisans with their products, and people as trophies or booty.

café-concerts. Exotic attractions like panoramas, ethnic restaurants, snake charmers and belly dancers were sometimes due to private enterprise instead of the state. Music critic Pierre Lalo complained that he was constantly besieged by music of all sorts. Even when he was trying to have a cup of tea, a potpourri from *Faust* or *Cavalleria rusticana* assaulted him or a fake gypsy played variations on the Rakocsky March. 'Overall,' he sniffed, 'the Exposition of 1900 does not offer its visitors as many little musical treats as its predecessors, where the various cafés of Tripoli, Morocco, Laos and elsewhere let those who so desired it sample many a subtle rhythm and many a bizarre tune.'<sup>5</sup>

The tourist's experience at the *Exposition* of 1900 would not have been complete without gathering up unfamiliar sights and sounds and tastes, essential to creating a sense of having left home. John Urry summarized the characteristics of the tourist's gaze as follows: 'Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered.'<sup>6</sup>

The 'Porte Binet' at the Place de la Concorde marked the beginning of this world tour, evoking daydreams of far-away places with its minarets that mimicked the architecture in the French North African colonies.<sup>7</sup> At the same entrance the importance of the feminine to the success of this enterprise was also symbolized by a statue mounted on a dome above the arches of the gate. There, instead of Liberty or Peace, stood La Parisienne, in her couturier-designed dress. Even if they were less prominently displayed than in 1889, exotic music, dancers and musicians fed the fantasy hinted at by the design of the gate. Though the *flâneurs* had tired of belly dancers, they still appreciated the slender grace of Javanese dancers; but in 1900 they were particularly drawn to Japan's geishas, the 'jolies bibelots-femmes'<sup>8</sup> who gave life to the characters of Pierre Loti's novels and to the Japanese prints that were so widely collected in the later nineteenth century. Most notable among them was Mme Sada Yakko, an accomplished actress/dancer/musician, who entranced both Tout-Paris and other tourists as she danced and died several times a day on the stage of Loie Fuller's art nouveau theater.

The organizers in 1895 had designated education the most important category for organizing the tourism at the *Exposition* (it was lauded as the source of all 'progress,' a buzzword of the Third Republic); next in importance came the arts, not commerce, to display the nation's accomplishments.<sup>9</sup> Their prominence is a logical extension of trends evident in earlier Parisian exhibitions (1867, 1878, 1889).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique,' *Le Temps* 21 August 1900: 1. 'Tout compte fait, l'Exposition de 1900 ne propose pas à ses visiteurs autant de petites récréations musicales que ses devancières, où divers cafés de Tripoli, du Maroc, de l'Annam et d'ailleurs permettaient à qui le voulait de goûter maints rythmes subtils et maintes mélodies bizarres.'

<sup>6</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* 3.

<sup>7</sup> For illustrations of the Porte Binet, both with and without the statue that crowned its central dome, see Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de siècle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> 'Les Femmes à l'Exposition,' *L'Illustration* 13 October 1900: 233.

<sup>9</sup> *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris, Actes Organiques* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895) 77, 79. See also Jann Pasler, 'Paris: Conflicting Notions of Progress,' in *The Late Romantic Era*, ed. Jim Samson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991) 389–416. Pasler is preparing an important contextual study of this period entitled *Useful Music, or Why Music Mattered in Paris, 1870–1913* for the University of California Press.

Despite Eugène de Solenière's timely, if impossibly ambitious, proposal to include an abundant display of music in the *Exposition*,<sup>10</sup> the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts waited until December 1899 to set up a commission charged with organizing a series of official orchestral, chamber music and organ concerts on the *Exposition* grounds with the aim of educating the tourist to the history of French music.<sup>11</sup> This commission's membership included all those who had 'arrived' in French musical circles—all the composers of the Institute plus a substantial sampling of Conservatoire officials.<sup>12</sup> They knew this task was politically sensitive, for musical style was changing rapidly and musicians were already factionalized by both politics and educational philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

The approximately sixty excerpts that showcased the *âme française* in the grand official concerts of orchestral/choral music received by far the most attention in the press,<sup>14</sup> though some music critics appear to have resolutely taken their summer vacations despite all the music at the Trocadéro.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps because the Commission wanted tight control over the musical image presented to that summer's tourists, the official, national events offered few premieres. On 31 May, however, the first concert of orchestral music did present a brand new cantata. *Le Feu céleste*, by Camille Saint-Saëns, honored electricity (a symbol of the nineteenth-century progress).<sup>16</sup> The press kept a tally sheet on the composers, genres and specific pieces

<sup>10</sup> Eugène de Solenière, *La Musique à l'Exposition de 1900: Projet présenté à la Commission* (Paris: Sagot, 1895).

<sup>11</sup> 'Paris et départements,' *Le Ménestrel* 65.51 (10 December 1899): 398. Their charge was to: 'donner au public une idée de l'histoire de la musique française depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours. La commission des auditions musicales devra donc faire un choix parmi les oeuvres françaises les plus marquantes de toutes les époques, y compris des oeuvres encore inédites.'

<sup>12</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns served as president; Jules Massenet and Théodore Dubois, vice-presidents; Alfred Bruneau, the reporter. Possibly as a posthumous gesture of respect, Georges Bizet's son, Jacques, was the secretary, even though he was not himself a musician. And members Ernest Reyer, Émile Paladilhe, Charles Lenepveu, Louis Bourgault-Ducoudray, Gabriel Fauré, Eugène Gigout, Alexandre Guilmant, Vincent d'Indy, Victorin Joncières, Georges Marty, Gabriel Pierné, Raoul Pugno, Émile Réty, Samuel Rousseau, Paul Taffanel, Paul Vidal, and Charles Widor shared the responsibility of choosing repertory for this retrospective exhibition, though some avoided the issue by skipping meetings where votes were taken. In addition, three members were government officials overseeing the fine arts and / or theatres (Henry Roujon, Des Chapelles and Adrien Bernheim). Jane Fulcher points out that the anti-Dreyfusards were in the minority on this committee, but the government was obligated to acknowledge the prestige of the Schola Cantorum and so included anti-Dreyfusard d'Indy even though he was hostile to the Republic. [*French Cultural Politics and Music* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 40].

<sup>13</sup> See Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics*, especially 15–35. For a brief and clear summary of the Dreyfus affair, see Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de siècle* 120–25.

<sup>14</sup> The orchestral concerts, the most prestigious series of the three, took place on Thursdays every two weeks at 2:15 p.m., from 31 May until 4 October. Counting orchestra members, soloists and chorus, Paul Taffanel (conductor at the Opéra and Concerts du Conservatoire) had at his disposal 250 performers. Edward Blakeman is currently studying this concert series and plans to incorporate information from Taffanel's unpublished personal papers. The Bibliothèque nationale de France (F-Bn, Département de la musique) has original programs for all of these orchestral concerts, but only a few for the other series. The ten organ concerts also occurred every two weeks at the Salle des fêtes, on Tuesdays at 3 p.m.; they ran from 5 June to 9 October. The ten concerts of chamber music began on Friday, 8 June at 2:15 p.m. and continued in the Petite Salle at the Palais du Trocadéro every two weeks through the summer until 17 October. An 11th official concert of chamber music is reviewed by A.D. (Dandelot) in *Le Monde musical* 12.20 (30 October 1900): 293.

<sup>15</sup> Generalizations about the press on the Exposition of 1900 have been based on a broad range of articles in: *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Guide musical*, *L'Illustration*, *Le Journal*, *Le Journal des débats*, *Le Ménestrel*, *Le Monde musical*, *Le Panorama*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Revue illustrée*, *Le Siècle*, *Le Temps*, *Le Théâtre*, and *La Vie parisienne*.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the use of electricity in expositions, see David E. Nye, 'Electrifying Expositions, 1880–1939,' in *Fair Representations*, 140–56. Nye states that the Exposition of 1900 was the first to use electric lighting on a massive scale.

chosen for the official programs and made gradually more caustic comments as the summer progressed. Some lobbied for their own favorite composers, inexplicably left out or represented by the wrong piece or the wrong genre. In October Lalo dismissed the official programs as having no overall logic at all; each work was like 'a flower in a pot' with 'no order of any sort, as if there were no historic periods, no evolution, and no schools in our music; [the commission considered] each work as an isolated phenomenon.'<sup>17</sup> Adolphe Jullien suggested maliciously that the amount of time allotted to each composer stood in inverse proportion to his personal merit.<sup>18</sup> The consensus was that politics within the musical world and the wish to placate all factions had damaged the effort to present the nation's musical image to the *Exposition* tourists.

All the same music critics who wrote on the official French concerts gave space to most or all of the visiting foreign groups. By 'foreign' the critics were referring to the other Europeans who sent orchestras or choruses. The government had officially invited applications by foreign concert societies in the same decree that set up the official French concert series,<sup>19</sup> and asked that they concentrate on their own national music.<sup>20</sup> Critics agreed that these nations, largely from northern Europe, had only immature national traditions, and generally advised them to stop imitating Mendelssohn or Wagner and to turn to their folk traditions so that they could better connect with their national 'soul.'<sup>21</sup> Donning French garb was not tolerated either; for example, Norwegian Johan Halvorsen's *Oriental Suite* was judged 'triste,' even if it competently borrowed harmony, rhythm and orchestration that evoked memories of Massenet's *Roi de Lahore* ('L'Orient en musique norvégienne...non ça ne va pas.').<sup>22</sup> Only Austrians and Germans were accorded an elevated status as bearers of a concert tradition equal to the French—not surprising given the veneration for Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner in late nineteenth-century France.

Still, before the Vienna Philharmonic under Gustav Mahler gave its three concerts that June, an article in *Le Figaro* seems to have tweaked French pride and added an edge to later critical commentary. This piece, designed to arouse interest in the ticket-buying public, claimed that the 'marvelous' Vienna Philharmonic was probably the 'most perfect' orchestra currently in existence. It then credited Mahler's 'extraordinary' conducting with piously preserving a German performance tradition in his tempi and interpretation of Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner.<sup>23</sup> More than one Parisian critic found the Philharmonic's woodwinds harsh, heavy and inferior to the French sound in general and to the winds of the *Concerts du Conservatoire*

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique,' *Le Temps* 9 October 1900: 1. '[S]ans ordre d'aucune sorte, comme s'il n'était en notre musique ni périodes historiques, ni évolutions, ni écoles, à considérer chaque oeuvre comme un phénomène isolé: une fleur dans un pot.'

<sup>18</sup> Adolphe Jullien, 'Revue musicale,' *Journal des débats* 2 September 1900: 1.

<sup>19</sup> 'Exposition de 1900,' *Le Monde musical* 12.13 (15 February 1900): 44–46.

<sup>20</sup> Unique among the concerts of Western music was the balalaika orchestra that charmed the public and critics with melancholy Russian songs as well as a repertory that included Schumann, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky and Bizet. The orchestra was just exotic enough to be praised for its 'national' character, but not so distant from the European frame of musical reference that the music critics could ignore it as mere 'clanging' or 'yowling.' This positive response to the traditional Russian instruments might be linked to the counter-discourse of the d'Indy forces, which stressed tradition rather than Republican progress. See Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics* 35–45 and Hugues Imbert, 'L'Orchestre Grand-russien (Balalaïkistes),' *Le Guide musical* 46.24/25 (24 June/1 July 1900): 509.

<sup>21</sup> On Mendelssohn and Wagner see Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique,' *Le Temps* 14 August 1900: 1.

<sup>22</sup> X, 'Choses et Autres,' *La Vie parisienne* 11 August 1900: 455.

<sup>23</sup> R. Brunel, 'Au jour le jour,' *Le Figaro* 10 June 1900: 1.

orchestra in particular. (Under Paul Taffanel, the latter served as France's official orchestra of the *Exposition* and was also at the disposition of visiting conductors from countries who chose not to send their own orchestras.) As for Mahler's interpretation of Mozart and Beethoven, they quibbled that some tempi were not right and his interpretations, though perceptive, were too intellectualized and personal.<sup>24</sup> Still, the military precision of the ensemble could not go unnoticed. Lalo wondered whether it resulted from years of discipline under Richter (Mahler's predecessor) or whether it might even be a manifestation of tendencies natural in the German race.<sup>25</sup>

During the *Exposition*, Édouard Colonne and his orchestra essayed an ambitious concert series of 'French,' 'foreign,' and 'popular' music in a large room at Au Vieux Paris, one of the numerous commercial venues at the *Exposition*.<sup>26</sup> Colonne's publicity claimed that he was doing works of 'all schools and all nationalities' in these close to 190 concerts. Still, his 'world' consisted of European nations only.<sup>27</sup> Alfred Bruneau's official report on the music of the *Exposition* also ignored non-European lands and their music. While some of his contemporaries did find virgin territories in the scales and timbres of the Far East, as they had in 1889, most critics ignored them. After all, to quote Julien Tiersot, 'Since Europe has always been the principal centre of human civilization, it is quite evident that the music practiced there has acquired a superiority that the peoples in other parts of the world have not been able to achieve.'<sup>28</sup> Pierre Lalo of *Le Temps* was one of the few regular music critics to deal with non-European music, though he preferred to spend most of this *feuilleton* talking about the Russian balalaika orchestra since he felt that it was 'rather civilized and refined.'<sup>29</sup> Then he adopted the manner of a *flâneur* and strolled casually through the music of the various Egyptian, Turkish and Persian theatres. He found it inferior—barbarous, noisy and incoherent. For the music of the Orient, he granted a bit more sophistication, but with pleasure so intermittent that he decided it was not worth the effort to understand it—'let's not overdo it,' he said, to close his article.

Though produced by 'inferior' or 'intermediate' races/cultures (as French colonial/racial theorists Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, Hippolyte Taine, Ernest Renan, and Gustave Le Bon ranked aborigines, Africans, and Asians),<sup>30</sup> non-European music was important to the success of the *Exposition* because it functioned as the sign of 'otherness' and could be collected by the tourist. According to Le Bon the arts were particularly easy to interpret as a measure of the soul of a race, which determined destiny, beliefs, and institutions—essentially all the main features of a civilization.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The fact that Mahler was Jewish and Austrian could well have colored the commentary on his conducting in the anti-Dreyfusard press.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique,' *Le Temps* 26 June 1900: 1.

<sup>26</sup> 'Paris.' *Le Guide musical* 46.32/33 (19/26 August 1900): 596–97.

<sup>27</sup> Hugues Imbert, 'Au "Vieux Paris,"' *Le Guide musical* 46.17 (29 April 1900): 392. Text reads: 'série considérable de concerts, dans lesquels seraient exécutées les oeuvres de toutes les écoles et de toutes les nationalités.'

<sup>28</sup> Curiously enough this statement appears at the head of an extensive series called 'Ethnographie musicale,' *Le Ménestrel* 66.40 (7 October 1900): 314. This series (1900–02) was later reprinted as *Notes d'ethnographie musicale* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1905).

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Lalo, 'La Musique,' *Le Temps* 21 August 1900: 1.

<sup>30</sup> See extended discussion of nationalism, racism and exoticism in French thought in Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Peoples* (1898; New York: G.E.Stechert, 1924) 101, 126.

Most who devoted space to exotic music wrote for fellow *flâneurs* who wanted the pleasure of gazing on the unusual to confirm the illusion of world travel and to validate their belief that they belonged to a superior culture. One of the more enthusiastic writers of this type, André Hallays, even called his column in the *Journal des débats* 'En Flânant.' Two commentators, Judith Gautier and Julien Tiersot, made notable efforts to serve as mediators across the racial/cultural divide. They examined the exotic more closely for the satisfaction of more sophisticated, contemplative travellers rather than for superficial tourists. Nonetheless, they, too, brought with them a truly ethnocentric bias.

As in 1889, the 1900 *Exposition* presented living displays of indigenous people whose colorful presence and performances helped reinforce the sense of 'otherness' and the correctness of evolutionism.<sup>32</sup> Ethnic parades were popular novelties for visitors and Parisians alike:

[T]he joyous parade of natives from our colonies with their costumes that are novel for the public, their original and largely unexpected music, all had the most vivid success yesterday evening. For my part, I know people who, resolved to dine at the Exposition only once a week, chose Wednesday in order to be there from the moment the procession is formed and the blacks begin their noisy, joyous promenade across the Trocadéro and the Champ de Mars.<sup>33</sup>

A lavishly illustrated coffee table book designed as a tourist souvenir serves as a digest of popular understanding of the *Exposition's* meaning and baldly reveals the view of others that underlay the French colonial *mission civilatrice*. At the Indochina exhibit its author Albert Quantin was sure that he had spotted 'no hostility hidden in the faces of this people used to successive and heavy servitude for centuries, who could only see us as emancipators.'<sup>34</sup> His text vaguely echoes the then-current debate of the relative merits of assimilation versus association as the basis of colonial policy.<sup>35</sup> Regarding the inferior and intermediate races of the colonies, he asks:

Should we be content to use them with kindness or should we raise them *en masse* to the European level? Sentimental enthusiasm is dangerous in this matter, and it would certainly suffice not to put a barrier in the way of the blossoming of the elite's potential ... Long centuries at a minimum will be necessary to efface the atavism of barbarism as old as the world.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For an interesting discussion of this phenomenon and its development in the twentieth century, see Nick Stanley, *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* (London: Middlesex UP, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> Edmond Le Roy, 'À L'Exposition,' *Le Journal* 26 July 1900: 2. It reads: 'le défilé joyeux des indigènes de nos colonies, avec leurs costumes nouveaux pour le public, leurs musiques originales et la plupart inattendues, tout cela a eu le plus vif succès hier soir. Pour ma part, je connais des gens qui, résolus à ne pas dîner à l'Exposition qu'une fois par semaine, ont choisi le mercredi afin d'être là dès le moment où le cortège se forme et où les noirs commencent leur promenade bruyante et gaie à travers le Trocadéro et le Champ de Mars.'

<sup>34</sup> Albert Quantin, *L'Exposition du siècle, 14 avril–12 novembre 1900* (Paris: Le Monde moderne, 1900) 183. 'Aucune hostilité cachée sur les visages de ce peuple habitué depuis des siècles à des servitudes successives et pesantes, qui ne peut voir en nous que des émancipateurs et que nous attacherons facilement.'

<sup>35</sup> For an extended discussion of this change in policy, see Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (New York: Columbia UP, 1961).

<sup>36</sup> Quantin, *L'Exposition du siècle* 187. '[À] propos de l'utilisation des races indigènes. Il faut bien dire qu'elles sont inférieures. Faut-il se contenter de les utiliser avec douceur, ou doit-on les élever en masse au niveau européen? Les entraînements sentimentaux sont dangereux en cette matière, et il suffirait certainement de ne pas mettre une barrière à l'éclosion des intelligences d'élite qui peuvent naître sous toutes les latitudes ... De longs siècles au moins sont nécessaires pour effacer l'atavisme d'une barbarie vieille comme le monde.'

Not surprisingly, some of these attitudes spill over into the comments on the music at the theatre of the Indo-Chinese pavilion. From the first performances on 29 June,<sup>37</sup> genuine Cambodian musicians played 'vague chords,' intoned the verses of an interminable prayer<sup>38</sup> and beat out a 'monotonous rhythm' on their 'primitive' instruments to accompany the dancers at 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10 pm.<sup>39</sup> The press gave short shrift to the music, but focused on the supple body movements and costume of the ravishing ballerina from the Paris Opéra, Cléo de Mérode. Some proclaimed her pseudo-Cambodian dance 'delicious,' but aficionados of the truly exotic disparaged this imperfect copy of the original. Photos of a lovely, petite Mlle Mérode show her decked out in splendid Cambodian costume, including fake fingernails, but with feet (in ballet shoes) in fully turned-out French ballet position (see Fig. 1).

Of the non-Western nations, Japan was treated the most respectfully. For one thing, the taste for Japanese art and collectibles had become well established in the past thirty years.<sup>40</sup> For another, Japan had shown its willingness to westernize its codes of law (to prepare for negotiation with the West on equal footing) and to modernize the military. As a result she easily defeated the Chinese army and navy in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and, during the *Exposition* in the summer of 1900, would enter China with British, French, Russian, German and American troops to rescue foreigners endangered by the Boxer Rebellion, a Chinese nationalist uprising. The Japanese people under their *mikado* could be praised as different from other Asians: intelligent and audacious, with a genius not just for the arts, but for industry.<sup>41</sup> Japan had become 'the great yellow nation,' a 'strange mixture of perfect civilization and fierce mysticism.'<sup>42</sup> Japanese representatives in the tastefully appointed national pavilion were characterized as impenetrable, little, yellow men, dressed in black, who might affect a wish to please but should still be seen as objects of suspicion.<sup>43</sup> Japanese women, on the other hand, embodied the dream of the exotic female for the tourists: they were characterized as dolls, birds, cats or other small, defenseless animals (a verbal convention perhaps set up by Loti's novels).<sup>44</sup> Even the *flâneurs* did wonder occasionally at the gaze of these gentle, smiling creatures, who were thought to find the 'gapers' who filed in front of them quite ridiculous.<sup>45</sup>

Twelve geishas were an important part of a living travelogue, 'Le Panorama du Tour du Monde,' an exotic theatre that opened in late June 1900 to whisk those willing to pay an extra 1 franc 50 through Spain, Greece, Constantinople, Syria, Egypt, India, Ceylon, Cambodia,

<sup>37</sup> 'A l'Exposition,' *Le Petit Parisien* 29 June 1900: 3

<sup>38</sup> René Maizeroy, 'La Danse à l'Exposition: Le Théâtre indo-chinois,' *Le Théâtre* 3.41 (September 1900): 20. The image (p. 21) of the ballerina (and well-known courtesan of the period) was the work of the photographer Reutlinger.

<sup>39</sup> 'Mlle Cléo de Mérode au Théâtre Indo-Chinois,' *Le Panorama* ns 20 (1900): n.p.

<sup>40</sup> See Leonard Pronko, *Theater East and West* (Berkeley, CA: U of California Press, 1967) 115–19.

<sup>41</sup> 'À l'Exposition: Le Japon à l'Exposition,' *Le Petit Parisien* 25 June 1900: 2.

<sup>42</sup> 'À l'Exposition,' *Le Petit Parisien* 6 May 1900: 1.

<sup>43</sup> André Hallays, 'En Flânant: Le Japon à l'Exposition,' *Le Journal des débats* 5 October 1900: 1. The appreciation for Japan's modernization disappeared in 1904–05, during the Russo-Japanese War. For an insightful discussion of the plurality of the meanings of Orientalism in the early twentieth century, specifically with regard to Roussel and Delage, see Jann Pasler, 'Race, Orientalism, and Distinction in the Wake of the 'Yellow Peril,' *Western Music and its Others*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000) 86–118.

<sup>44</sup> Irene L. Szyliowicz, *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman* (London: Macmillan, 1988) 120.

<sup>45</sup> *Exposition universelle 1900, Le Panorama* 3 (Paris: L. Baschet, 1900) n.p. 'Ces jeunes personnes trouvent, dit-on, très ridicules les badauds qui défilent devant elles. Et c'est ce qui leur donne un air moqueur.'

Figure 1. Cléo de Mérode. Photograph by Reutlinger, *Le Théâtre* 3.41 (September 1900): 21



LA DANSE À L'EXPOSITION.  
THÉÂTRE INDO-CHINOIS.  
M. Cléo de Mérode. — Danse Cambodgienne.

China and Japan via an animated diorama. 'Those who enjoy the strange and unexpected will be served what they wish. They will see the dreams evoked by reading Pierre Loti's books realized before their very eyes. Japanese and Javanese women will vie with one another with their grace and charm, next to Chinese and Hindus with their stupefying exercises. Each performance will be enhanced by cinematic projections.'<sup>46</sup> The Japanese dancers, singers and instrumentalists, with their 'spiritual eyes' and symbolic names like 'Miss Weeping Willow,' were eminently marketable.<sup>47</sup>

The most remarked upon of all the exotic entertainments, however, were the foreshortened kabuki dramas adapted for Western tastes by Otojiro Kawakami's Imperial Theatre Troupe, the first to tour outside of Japan. Its star actress, Sada Yacco, incarnated what the French wanted from *japonisme* and inflamed the curiosity of Tout-Paris. Full-page portraits of Sada Yacco (Sada Yacco) by Nadar appeared in several illustrated magazines, including *La Revue illustrée* and *Le Théâtre*, which featured another Nadar image of the Japanese actress in costume for her role in *La Ghésa et le Chevalier* (see Fig. 2 & 3).<sup>48</sup> The whole package catered to the tourist's hunger for fantasy—sumptuous costumes, graceful dances, strange harmony and melody, realistic poses, and stylized death. This remarkably talented former geisha, Sada Yacco (1872–1945), capitalized on the perception of Japan as refined and mysterious, yet somehow barbaric under a smoothly applied veneer.<sup>49</sup> Though she was an accomplished koto player, the audience was touched more by the music in the voice (a 'voice like a fearful child, or a wounded bird') of this 'cute doll of silk, gold and flame.'<sup>50</sup> Japanese theatre music, on the other hand, made an impression on far fewer because it functioned largely as an accompaniment and was so different from Western music in aesthetic, timbre, texture and tonal system.<sup>51</sup>

Like the rest of Tout-Paris (including the literary symbolists, visual artists, and stars of theatre and dance) Judith Gautier (1845–1917), who rivalled Loti in her success with exotic

<sup>46</sup> 'A l'Exposition,' *Le Petit Parisien* 10 May 1900: 3. 'Les amateurs d'étrange et d'imprévu seront servis à souhait. Ils y verront réalisés les rêves évoqués par la lecture des livres de Pierre Loti. Japonaises et Javanaises lutteront de grâce et de charme, à côté des Chinois et des Hindous aux stupéfiants exercices. Chaque représentation sera agrémentée par des projections cinématographiques.'

<sup>47</sup> *Exposition universelle 1900, Le Panorama* ns 13 (Paris: L. Baschet, 1900) n.p.

<sup>48</sup> See *La Revue illustrée* (15 November 1900): n.p.; *Le Théâtre* 3.44 (October 1900): 9. The importance of Sada Yacco and her husband, Otojiro Kawakami, to the reform and modernization of Japanese theatre has attracted the attention of several theatre scholars. See James R. Brandon, 'Kabuki and Shakespeare: Balancing Yin and Yang,' *The Drama Review* 43.2, t. 162 (Summer 1999): 15–53 and also Jonah Salz, 'Otojiro Kawakami and Sada Yacco: International reformers,' diss. (Master's, Performance Studies), New York U, 1985, and the article he based on this work 'Intercultural Pioneers: Otojiro Kawakami and Sada Yacco,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 20 (1993): 25–74. There were two more tours of the West (1901–02, 1907–08). On the 1901–02 tour (again with Loie Fuller), Sada Yacco's performance greatly impressed Puccini, then in the process of writing *Madama Butterfly*. See Arthur Groos, 'Cio-Cio-San and Sadayacco: Japanese Music Theatre in *Madama Butterfly*,' *Monumenta Nipponica* 54.1 (Spring 1999): 41–73. On this tour Otto Abraham and Erich von Hornbostel studied the musical performances of the Kawakami troupe in Berlin. See their essay 'Tonsystem und Musik der Japaner,' *SIMG* 4.2 (1902): 302–60.

<sup>49</sup> For an extensive account of the geisha in Paris, see Shelley C. Berg, 'Sada Yacco in London and Paris, 1900: Le Rêve réalisé,' *Dance Chronicle* 18.3 (1995): 343–404.

<sup>50</sup> Arsène Alexandre, 'Théâtre de la Loie Fuller,' *Le Théâtre* 3.41 (September 1900): 16–18.

<sup>51</sup> Danièle Pistone, in 'Les conditions historiques de l'exotisme musical français,' *RIMF* 6.2 (November 1981): 11–22, suggests that it became gradually easier toward the end of the nineteenth century to absorb scales and musical systems from elsewhere because the Western tonal system was losing its force. Until that point the use of any material from the far East tended to be reductionist pentatonicism. For comments on non-Western music from 1900, see Georges Servières, 'L'Exotisme musical à l'Exposition de 1900,' *Le Guide musical* 46.42 (1900): 743–45, where he reviews the first five booklets by Judith Gautier and Louis Benedictus.

Figure 2. Sada Yacco (Sada Yakko). Photograph by Nadar, *Le Théâtre* 3.44 (October 1900): 1

1900 OCTOBRE - II N° 44

# LE THÉÂTRE

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Figure 3. Sada Yakko as La Ghéscha. Photograph by Nadar, *Le Théâtre* 3.44 (October 1900): 9



novels, visited Loie Fuller's theater.<sup>52</sup> As in 1889, she collaborated with her friend, composer Louis Benedictus, to produce pamphlets for the curious to learn a bit more about 'bizarre' music.<sup>53</sup> She concentrated in her preface to *La Musique japonaise: Les Danses de Sada-Yacco* on the dialogue for the plays the troupe most often performed and devoted only half of one page to the music itself. There she confined her comments to ethnocentric statements such as 'One hears nothing but thin scrapings, strangled voices and yowlings of distress.'

Writing for the music paper *Le Ménestrel*, Tiersot (1857–1926) made more effort to approach the unfamiliar music than did Gautier, who was a non-musician more interested in the overall impression than in the detailed reality.<sup>54</sup> Yet after all his reading of scholarly works on Japanese theatre, scanning printed collections of Japanese music, interviewing and observing the musicians, transcribing the dances of the geishas and analyzing the theatrical presentations of the Kawakami troupe, Tiersot could 'hear' but still could not appreciate the object of his study: 'the music of Japan is far from having achieved the high level that the other arts (painting, sculpture and architecture) have.'<sup>55</sup>

The various commentators who wrote about the music at the *Exposition* used different tactics to evaluate aesthetic value. The true competition, of course, took place between 'superior,' white European cultures who had evolved into a position of leadership, reinforced their might through technology, and simply confirmed this pre-eminent ranking with their cultural products. (French writers made it clear that French and Austro-German art music stood at the pinnacle of civilized human achievements). They also made the case that the younger concert traditions of other European nations had potential, but were still imperfect in reflecting their national souls—sometimes betraying their indebtedness to French and German models. While popular Western music was present, largely in commercial ventures, critics ignored it almost entirely. Music of the colonies and other non-European nations did not merit the attention of music critics either, since these traditions reflected the 'inferior' or 'intermediate' stage of evolution among the races. Still, such music had its function at an international exposition, for it provided a means to escape bourgeois reality, to evoke the impression of travel to another place and to bring unrefined vitality to the jaded ear of the European tourist—all this without the danger, effort or expense of actual world travel. If the tourist's attention to the exotic music was often distracted by the graceful bodies of women who danced to its unusual sounds, so much the better. Together these signs of 'otherness' pleased the eye, intrigued the ear, and inspired the daydream. What more pleasant way to be transported to distant realms in 1900 than to see Loti's heroines and Hokusai's images come to life on a summer afternoon.

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<sup>52</sup> See Joanna Richardson, *Judith Gautier, A Biography* (London and New York: Quartet Books, 1986). Fluent in Mandarin Chinese and Persian, this elder daughter of poet Théophile Gautier began attending and writing about the Expositions in 1867; interestingly, she never wanted to tarnish the dream by visiting the Orient.

<sup>53</sup> The series of booklets, *Les Musiques bizarres à l'Exposition de 1900* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1900), concentrates on the song, dance and theatre of Java, Egypt, Madagascar, Indo-China and Japan.

<sup>54</sup> Julien Tiersot, who had training as a musicologist, conducted field work and interviews at the Exposition grounds. He transcribed and even analyzed this music in rudimentary fashion both in 1889 (*Musiques Pittoresques, Promenade musicales* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1889)) and 1900 (*Notes d'Ethnographie musicale* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1905)). On 1889 see also, Anik Devriès, 'Les Musiques d'Extrême-Orient à l'Exposition universelle de 1889,' *Cahiers Debussy* ns 1 (1977): 25–37, and on Tiersot, Jean-Paul Montagnier, 'Julien Tiersot: Ethnomusicologue à l'Exposition Universelle de 1889. Contribution à une histoire française de l'ethnomusicologie,' *IRASM* 21 (1990): 91–100.

<sup>55</sup> Tiersot, *Ethnographie musicale* 38.