

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract & bio
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Becoming Cosmopolitan in the Cosmos: Mimesis, Alterity, and the Birth of Language in Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*

As early-modern Europeans extended their reach across the globe, they also turned their thoughts to the sky. Alongside the rise of travel narratives, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus gave rise to a large body of literature on extraterrestrial life spanning genres including philosophical treatises, novels, and staged works. As Peter Szendy has argued, this literature suggests a radical form of cosmopolitanism: one that understands the human world, and our belonging within it, in terms of an always-already aporetic relation with the Other.

I take this intersection of geographic power, cosmopolitan thought, and extraterrestrial fantasy as my starting point to examine Haydn's setting of Carlo Goldoni's immensely popular *Il mondo della luna*. Goldoni's libretto tells the story of a deceitful astrologer who tricks a credulous man (Buonafede) into believing he has been transported to the inhabited world of the moon; although Buonafede ultimately discovers the truth, the farce succeeds in persuading him to agree to a series of marriages to which he was initially disinclined. My paper focuses on the second act, in which Buonafede gives his consent to these marriages in a euphonious, spontaneously invented lunar language. I argue that Buonafede's mimetic adoption of the Other's language stages an imagined birth of language through which sound becomes invested with social power—power that can cross individual, national, and even planetary boundaries.

Studies of *Il mondo della luna* thus far have read it as an allegory of various forms of alterity, including Turkish masquerade, female rebellion, and the American Revolution. I propose instead that we understand the opera as an ambivalent exploration of the cosmopolitan possibility of becoming-Other as such. It is this possibility that resounds in Act III when Buonafede—fully aware that the lunar world was a fiction—nevertheless proclaims: “I want to act like a lunar man!”

Etha Williams is a PhD student in historical musicology at Harvard University. Prior to beginning studies at Harvard, she completed an MA in musicology at the University of Minnesota and a BA in biology at the University of Chicago. Her eras of interest vary widely, encompassing repertoires such as late-medieval polyphony, eighteenth-century keyboard music, and later-twentieth-century modernism. Across these varied objects of study, she is interested in how musical sound, musical thought, and philosophical thought mutually condition and respond to one another. She has presented her work at conferences including the International Conference on Music, Marxism, and the Frankfurt School, the 2014 meeting of the American Musicological Society, and the 2015 Royal Musical Association Conference on Music and Philosophy.