

Musicae Scientiae

<http://msx.sagepub.com/>

Introduction: "Interdisciplinary musicology"

Richard Parncutt

Musicae Scientiae 2006 10: 7

DOI: 10.1177/1029864906010001011

The online version of this article can be found at:

http://msx.sagepub.com/content/10/1_suppl/7

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

European
Society for the
Cognitive Sciences
Of
Music

[European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music](http://www.sagepublications.com)

Additional services and information for *Musicae Scientiae* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://msx.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://msx.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: http://msx.sagepub.com/content/10/1_suppl/7.refs.html

Introduction: “Interdisciplinary musicology”

RICHARD PARNCUTT

Institut für Musikwissenschaft, Universität Graz, Austria

Musicology or musicologies? If we are talking about a unitary discipline that is a permanent member of the academic canon, then “musicology” would appear to be the correct term. But given the enormous diversity of academic traditions and ways of thinking within musicology, one could argue that “musicologies” is more apt. This raises existential questions. Has musicology become excitingly diverse or hopelessly fragmented? What role, status, and form should musicology take in a neoliberal academic world where fundamental university structures are being questioned and revised?

That music is an important topic for academic study can hardly be questioned (Gembris, 2005). Every known musical culture has a rich musical heritage that contributes significantly to its identity. Modern media have made music, perhaps more than ever before, a part of everyday life. The global music market is enormous, and musical recording companies are among the biggest multinationals. A large proportion of internationally famous modern personalities are musicians, and a large proportion of ordinary people actively play or sing music in their leisure time. Music is thus intimately connected with cultural identity, quality of life, and economic productivity.

The conferences on interdisciplinary musicology are not primarily concerned with the importance of music and musicology, which is taken for granted, but rather with the structure and academic efficiency of musicology. The efficiency of an academic enterprise may be regarded as inversely proportional to the amount of time and effort that goes into the achievement of useful academic insights. To optimize academic efficiency, it is necessary to optimally balance intra-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary work. Perhaps the most important inspiration for CIM was the realisation that the subdisciplines of musicology have grown too far from each other and that musicological research has become too intra-disciplinary, which could be causing its academic efficiency to suffer. If that is the case, the solution must be to explicitly promote interdisciplinarity.

This issue is not confined to musicology, of course, but is more or less present in all academic disciplines. The situation may nonetheless have become more

e x t r e m e

in musicology due to the diversity of academic approaches and traditions represented among its subdisciplines. To understand the current situation, it helps to survey the recent history of musicology. The following account is intended to complement ideas already published in the CIM04 abstract book (download: <http://gewi.uni-graz.at/~cim04>).

Since 1945, the subdisciplines of musicology have become increasingly sophisticated and specialised. Ethnomusicologists, historical musicologists, and so-called “systematic” musicologists have increasingly gone their separate ways. Even within systematic musicology, acousticians, psychologists, sociologists, aestheticians, philosophers, music theorists, computer scientists, psychoacousticians, neuroscientists, and performance researchers have increasingly created their own separate international networks in the form of conferences, societies, and journals. A similar development has been evident on the practically-oriented fringes of musicology in areas such as music education, music therapy, and music medicine.

In spite of the broad spectrum of musical, musicological, non-musical, and non-musicological academic approaches and ways of thinking within today’s musicology, the many “musicologies” still undeniably have one thing in common: a fascination and curiosity for music, whether it be regarded as repertoire or phenomenon, and whether it is the music itself (however defined or understood) or the context in which it appears that is the focus of study. That being the case, progress in musicology *as a unitary discipline* must depend on the degree to which its subdisciplines successfully interact with each other.

Research cannot be separated from researchers. Researchers are personalities who have unique qualifications and experience, who are motivated by personal factors, and who make innumerable subjective, arbitrary decisions as their research develops. Although academic writing tends to carefully disguise the subjective nature of research and the psychological and professional strengths and weaknesses of its authors, the products of research can hardly be regarded as abstract or objective. This is true regardless of whether we are talking about quantum mechanics or literary criticism.

One of the aims of CIM has therefore been to make the subjective, personal aspects of research more transparent, to consider their implications, and to act on them. Researchers in musicology can have very diverse academic backgrounds and ways of thinking. The gaps between humanities and sciences, and between academic research and musical practice, are especially broad and challenging, at both personal and academic levels: scientists often have serious difficulties understanding the concerns and arguments of humanities scholars, and vice-versa. The result can be poor communication and imperfect research. A common reaction is to retreat to the safety of one’s own (sub-) discipline and to ignore the possible contribution of other (sub-) disciplines to one’s research questions. Conventional hierarchical uni-

versity structures tend to encourage this kind of response, and it is usually the safest way to promote one's academic career. CIM counters this tendency by encouraging people from distant disciplines to work together.

The amount of information that a single researcher can process is limited. This amount may even determine the size of a discipline, which may be defined as a coherent area of research that is just big enough for one person, in one lifelong career, to become trained in the basics and understand the main literature. According to Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993), that might take some 10 000 hours of hard work. Following this line of thinking further, the size of a discipline is also limited by the ability of individual researchers to contribute actively to it and to keep up-to-date with new research developments over a continuous period of several years or decades. In other words, the extent of a discipline may reflect the cognitive capacity of its leading representative researchers. The size of each of the above-listed subdisciplines of (systematic) musicology may be limited in this way.

Both these points suggest that it is impossible for a single typical researcher to produce interdisciplinary work at the highest level. Collaboration between representatives of the two disciplines in question is usually necessary to achieve this goal. Each participant should be primarily a specialist in a single discipline. The recent expansion of research in most fields has made this claim truer now than it ever was.

In order to promote productive interaction between and among the subdisciplines of musicology, and between them and academically distant but topically relevant (sub-)disciplines, CIM has developed the following two strategies:

- Paper submissions are preferred if they are authored by at least two experts representing contrasting academic traditions. The idea is to encourage people to work together who might otherwise not have done so — perhaps the most concrete and visible way of promoting the unity of musicology.
- Reviewers rate not only the academic quality of each submission in the usual way, but also the *degree* to which they are interdisciplinary. To help the reviewers make these evaluations, they are given a list of possible definitions and interpretations of the term "interdisciplinary" (see the CIM04 website).

The ten papers in this volume are products of this procedure. Inevitably, they differ in the degree to which they approach CIM's ideal of interdisciplinarity. This ideal may be more closely approached in the future, as the CIM concept becomes better known and the pool of possible contributions to the conference expands.

Another of CIM's aims is to reduce the diversity of approaches to academic quality control in different branches of musicology, while at the same time recognizing the need for different approaches in different disciplines. Common to all papers in this volume is a high academic standard. Altogether, each paper was reviewed by no less than four different anonymous experts: the two who reviewed the initial abstract submission to the conference, and the two who reviewed the

Musica Scientia submission. In both cases, the two reviewers were internationally recognized experts in one of the two main disciplines addressed by the paper.¹

Acknowledgments

I am especially grateful to Annekatri Kesser, Fränk Zimmer, Sieglinde Petzl, Werner Jauk, and Werner Goebel for their academic and administrative support at CIM04. I take this opportunity also to thank Caroline Traube and her colleagues Serge Lacasse and Michel Duchesneau (CIM05, Montreal) as well as Jaan Ross (CIM07, Tallinn) for their enthusiastic adoption and enrichment of the CIM concept. Officials of the 24 participating societies of CIM04 (listed on the website) contributed by officially endorsing and promoting the conference among their members. Sincere thanks are also due to the many scholars who voluntarily reviewed either the papers submitted to this volume or the abstract submissions to CIM04, and thereby guaranteed the academic quality of the conference and of this special issue: Kofi Agawu, Christina Agnostopolou, Anders Askenfelt, Judith Becker, Candace Brower, Anna Maria Busse Berger, William Caplin, Peter Cariani, Michèle Castellengo, Eric Clarke, Nicholas Cook, Eugenia Costa-Giomi, Roger Dannenberg, Tia Denora, Nicola J. Dibben, David Fallows, Sean Ferguson, Neville H. Fletcher, Anselm Gerhard, Gerd Grupe, Jill Halstead, Pam Heaton, Antoine Hennion, Ellie M. Hisama, David M. Howard, Alexandra Lamont, Colin Lawson, Marc Leman, Daniel J. Levitin, Elizabeth W. Marvin, Fiona McLaughlin, Gary McPherson, Isabelle Peretz, Rüdiger Schumacher, Eleanor Selfridge-Field, Dean Simonton, Ruth Solie, Martin Stokes, Barbara Tillmann, Olli Väisälä, Jaan Valsiner, Marcelo Wanderley, Peter R. Webster, W. Luke Windsor, Menno M. van Zaanen, and Robert Zatorre. For comments on a draft of this introduction I thank Nicola Dibben. Finally, I am grateful to Irène Deliège for her constant support and guidance.

(1) Address for correspondence:

Richard Parncutt
Institut für Musikwissenschaft
Universität Graz
Mozartgasse 3
A-8010 Graz
Austria
Fax: +43 316 380-9755
e-mail: parncutt@uni-graz.at
<http://www-gewi.uni-graz.at/staff/parncutt>
Tel. Office +43 316 380-2409
Home +43 316 289641
Mobile +43 699 1265 2109

• REFERENCES

- Ericsson K. A., Krampe R. T., & Tesch-Römer C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological Review*, 100, 363-406.
- Gembris, H. (2005). The impact of musicality on musical development. *Nova Acta Leopoldina NF* 92, 341, 147-59.