

Why systematic musicology? Why a student conference?

The concept of systematic musicology (henceforth SysMus) was introduced in an oft-cited paper by the Austrian musicologist Guido Adler in 1885. Musicology has changed enormously since then, but the basic idea of SysMus has not: whereas music historians (and, meanwhile, ethnomusicologists) tend to focus on specific manifestations of music (performances, styles, genres, works, performers, composers, traditions), systematic musicologists tend to ask more general questions about music such as what distinguishes music from sound, how instruments work, what motivates people to make music, what roles music plays in society and culture, what information is communicated by music, and so on.

In Adler's original concept, SysMus included aesthetics, music theory, music education and comparative musicology. The last three of these four have since established themselves as independent disciplines (comparative musicology as ethnomusicology). Today's SysMus still includes aesthetics, which has expanded to include both empirical and theoretical aesthetics as well as other aspects of music philosophy. But modern SysMus is more closely related to Adler's *Hilfswissenschaften* (auxiliary or parent disciplines): acoustics, mathematics, physiology, psychology, logic, linguistics, education and aesthetics. Adler made it clear that any list of this kind must be incomplete, so he presumably would have approved of the modern expansion of SysMus to include sociology (both empirical and theoretical) and the information sciences.

The advantage of the SysMus concept is that it situates many diverse areas of music research within musicology, so that all musicologists can benefit from them and interdisciplinary interactions can flourish. But since SysMus never caught on in a big way outside the German-speaking world, many areas of SysMus are still not regarded as "real" musicology. I see SysMus08 as part of a broader project to solve that problem.

Why a student conference? There are several reasons for that. One of them involves the inherent difficulty of interdisciplinary collaboration. As the many subdisciplines of musicology grow and become more independent, new infrastructures are needed to promote interdisciplinary collaboration among them. If SysMus is to become more unified and coherent, systematic musicologists with different disciplinary backgrounds will need to work together more often and more productively. Since that is not easy to do, it is a good idea to start practising early in your career.

I am glad to be associated with a conference that is bringing so many talented young researchers from so many countries to Graz, and am grateful to Manuela Marin for the enormous amount of work that she has put into the organisation. If you make contacts here that open up new career opportunities, all that work will have been worthwhile.

Richard Parncutt, conference co-director