

**Musicology and Sister Disciplines - Past, Present, Future. Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of the International Musicological Society, London, 1997.**

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While I was first leafing through this book trying to make measured sense of how and whether it was making sense for me, something somewhere in my mind started to versify a perversely instant response (with no apologies to Auden):

*This is the IMS crossing the border,  
bringing confusion to classical order,*

*shocks for the elderly, toys for the young,  
songs that, for some, would be better  
unsung:*

*lit. crit. to hip hop and soc. sci. to chant,  
Bourdieu, Adorno, Fish, Giddens, and  
Kant...*

This could go on - in fact, it did, - but I think I'd better leave off here. In any case, any 'confusion' appears severely limited; the striking feature of this volume is the sense that borders have long ago been crossed and a broad consensus has been achieved about appropriate ways to do musicology.

The book constitutes an inclusive record of the IMS Congress of 1997 and is laid out in a way that reflects the structure of the event. Two keynote papers are followed by the proceedings from seven Round Tables, made up of news, views and debates on 'Perception & cognition', 'Literary studies', 'Directions in musicology', 'Historiography', 'Sociology', 'Philosophy' and 'Cultural politics'. Subsequently, reports from most of the forty-nine study sessions (on topics ranging in scope from 'La vie musicale sous Vichy, 1940-1944' through 'Interpreting performance: Chopin-playing in perspective' to 'Musicology and art history') are presented, the volume concluding

with abstracts of papers in the thirty-six free and four poster sessions. As must be evident from this description, a huge amount of information is packed into the book's 670-odd pages of text, which provides, in essence, a global 'satellite snapshot' of musicology and its neighbour and sibling disciplines in the late nineteen-nineties.

The volume demonstrates clearly that by the time of the congress musicology had crossed many of the disciplinary borders explicitly or implicitly delineated in 'foundational' statements such as Kerman's 'Musicology' of 1985. Moreover, the traffic does not seem to be one way; from the contributions here it is evident that musicology has long since embraced asylum seekers from many disciplines.

From its title, one might have expected the book to embody polemical debate, or to paint a picture of a discipline under siege from its siblings. However, close reading of its contents reveals that most contributions are unpolemical presentations which demonstrate that whatever the (largely, North American) perturbations of the recent musicological past, the orthodoxies against which most agitation has been directed have proven to be straw men. Almost nowhere in this book does a died-in-the-chair positivist seek to treat music as separable from its cultural matrix; those papers that might be stigmatised as 'positivist' (being concerned with sources, or with analyses of the 'autonomous artwork') tend to take account of and to incorporate perspectives that are unimpeachably interpretivist and contextual, while the intransigencies of relativist post-modern positions are

tempered by the materiality of their subjects. A sense of consensus permeates this volume.

So, for example, Susan Rankin notes the minimal penetration of medieval musical studies by semiotics, deconstructionism, etc., but then proceeds to demonstrate that their concerns appear in any case to be embedded in the texture of her domain of study as exemplified in her treatment of the surviving corpora as constituting traces of complex musical interactions between the oral and the textual. Similarly, Naomi Cumming's summative response to the papers in the 'Philosophy' Round Table reconciles diverse voices (Peter Kivy's valorisation of 'absolute music', Lewis Rowell's re-valuation of the concept of 'value', Ruth Katz's defence of 'rationality' and Eero Tarasti's Heideggerian disquisition on 'transcendence' and 'text') in concluding that (p 417) 'An interpreting Subject is not an isolated mind, but a member of a community whose criteria of inclusion and manner of relating to shared genres themselves shift continually.' Indeed, this affirmation constitutes the most explicit statement of the sense of agreement that pervades this book, which is that consideration of music should not and cannot be dissociated from consideration of the cultural context(s) in which it is embedded. Agreement on this point remains, for the most part, implicit throughout the volume but is evident in the ways in which most, if not all contributors, recognise the need to problematise much that earlier musical scholarship might have accepted without question. If there is a consensus here it is that music cannot be understood outwith its contexts of occurrence (and by 'music' here I mean that which constitutes the subjects of musicological discourse and debate every bit as much as I mean that

'music' which is seen, heard, shown, sung, bought, sold, told, imagined and remembered).

However, the very first Round Table reported in the volume, on Perception and Cognition, seems to be outside that consensus, appearing to treat music as a 'given' in exploring the dynamics of human experience without explicit consideration of that music's context. Moreover, all the contributions to that Round Table seem to have as their goal the production of generalised accounts of musical experience which are interpretable as applying across cultural contexts. While neither of these practices is exactly proscribed by the consensus, they certainly appear to be going against its spirit. Conversely, certain disciplines represented in this volume appear to deal with issues that are absolutely central to the consensus, in particular those of the Sociology Round Table. Indeed, some of the surprisingly few claims in this volume as to methodological privilege are to be found in the contributions to this Round Table, claims that would seem to be justified by its focus on music as inextricably interlinked with its cultural context.

The foci of the two Round Tables appear incompatible; nevertheless, it is possible to argue that both approaches are integral elements in any comprehensive attempt to understand music, and that the concerns and aims not only of the Sociology, but also of the Perception and Cognition Round Table are essential to any understanding of music in context. As someone whose research is (fairly) firmly in the Perception and Cognition camp, it could be objected that 'I would say that, wouldn't I?'; however, examination of the contributions in both Round Tables does suggest that

each stands complementary, indeed, supplementary, to the other.

The Sociology Round Table presents a wide range of socially-centred perspectives, running from Christian Kaden's seemingly formalist view of sociology's role in elucidating music, by way of Volker Kalisch's claim for a foundational role for an anthropology specifically rooted in European intellectual traditions in addressing questions of cultural meaning, through to Peter Martin's whole-hearted endorsement of social constructivism and of the significance of the mundane. Interspersed with these contributions are papers by Ruth Finnegan, Tullia Magrini and Mario Viera de Carvalho which show how concepts of music as social process can enlighten, and be enlightened by, the study of micro-social and historical systems and dynamics. Philip Bohlman's contribution brings an explicitly ethnomusicological dimension to the session, identifying a common focus for sociological and ethnomusicological perspectives in illuminating (p297) 'the proliferation of musical identities'.

The participants in the Sociology Round Table are expressly concerned to clarify for each other the ways in which different disciplines of sociology, anthropology and ethnomusicology adopt different perspectives on music as a social and cultural phenomenon. There is a sharp awareness of the potentially conflicting intellectual roots of, say, the continental European idea of anthropology promoted by Kalisch and the North American discipline of ethnomusicology characterised by Bohlman, but there is here a shared and overtly declared recognition of the need to identify common ground and complementary concerns.

In contrast, the Perception and Cognition Round Table appears to take the common ground as a given, and here that common ground seems largely methodological, rooted in 'scientific' practice applied to listening and to performance. Irène Deliège presents a model for the processes implicated in real-time listening to music that is based on notions of cue-abstraction and category and prototype formation, together with empirical evidence supporting the model; Lola Cuddy and Nicholas Smith explore the unfolding perceptions of key-movement in the course of listening to Beethoven's Waldstein sonata Op 53 (ii), finding that their results are best explained by the existence of multiple representations of a piece in ongoing music perception. Alf Gabrielsson and Siv Lindström Wik presents results of experimental investigations of 'strong experiences' of music; Carol Krumhansl presents the results of psychophysiological studies that demonstrate that listening to music evokes the physiological correlates of emotion; while Mirielle Besson and Pascaline Regnault show by means of EEG (electroencephalogram) studies that semantic (linguistic) and harmonic incongruities elicit different patterns of EEG activity, concluding that their neural processing is dependent on different neural structures or processes. Finally, Bruno Repp, in examining timing in performances of Chopin's Etude in E, op 10 no 3, finds that particular musical structures are associated with particular patterns of expressive timing and that underlying these are 'basic perceptual-motor effects that are independent of musical experience and conscious control'. These contributions, in quite different ways, provide compelling, testable and predictive accounts of the ways in which music exemplifies the dynamics of the embodied mind.

Perhaps in recognition of its 'outsider' status, the Perception and Cognition Round Table is followed by responses and discussion. John Sloboda suggests that although the perceived relevance of studies in the psychology of music from within musicology is often low, they have the potential to bridge the 'mind-body gap' by elucidating sub- or semi-conscious cognitive processes implicated in the experience of music. Eleanor Selfridge-Field warns against 'over-generalisability' of psychological results and stresses the need to ensure that experimental and musicological delineations of materials and elements of music are commensurate in order to clarify terms of the musicology-psychology debate and inter-disciplinary relevance. Christian Kaden objects to the notion of 'perceptual facts' as being revealed by experimental psychology of music, raising the issue of the culture-specificity of the findings and to some extent the concepts embedded in the theories underlying those findings;

It has to be recognised that these criticisms of cognitive approaches have some validity, a validity that appears all the stronger in the light of the Sociology Round Table's unambiguous characterisation of music as social process. It's probably true to say that the contributions to the Perception and Cognition Round Table tend, in general, to take music as a 'given', employing it in the context of experiments in a way that appears to be abstracted from the cultural contexts that are shown in the rest of volume to endow it with significance. However, the music that is taken as 'given' in these contributions is not a static but a dynamic 'given', a set of operational definitions which are necessarily revisable in the light of the relations between hypotheses and findings that

are revealed in the course of experiment. Hence one can suggest that Kaden's dubiety about the 'perceptual facts' revealed by the cognitive sciences of music misconstrues the status of those 'perceptual facts'; they are neither immutable and definitive nor intended to be so, but are provisional and may prove foundational in respect of, or revisable in the light of, subsequent research. (The one 'scientific' contribution to this volume that constitutes an exception to this position would appear to be the keynote paper by Roger Penrose, whose previous theses about mind in Penrose (1989) are those of an eliminativist reductionist, but whose contribution here appears to be that of a fideistic Platonist. But, in its under-researched superficiality, Penrose's paper is wholly unrepresentative of the ways in which music and the sciences interact in this volume.)

But it is the case, as Selfridge-Field suggests, that there is need for studies of music perception and cognition to consider cultural context more overtly in arriving at operational definitions and in constraining inferences made on the basis of empirical findings; in effect, the cognitive sciences of music must take cognisance of the fact that music has the capacity to be incorporated in, derive meaning from and interactively confer meaning on the experiential contexts in which it occurs. In mitigation, it has to be said that a growing recognition of this is evident in the music cognition literature of the last twenty years; even in the five years since the conference took place there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of research devoted to cross-cultural issues and a markedly enhanced sophistication in dealing empirically with music and mind in social context

(as, for example, in Sloboda's own recent 'everyday uses of music' project, see Sloboda and O'Neill, 2001).

Yet just as the study of music perception and cognition needs to address music in cultural context, approaches to music that take cultural contexts as their foci need to acknowledge or address some of the issues central in the study of music perception and cognition as represented here. This is perhaps best exemplified by examining the ways that some of these issues are dealt with in the Sociology Round Table.

As Sloboda states, cognitive approaches can contribute to the elucidation of music in bridging the 'mind-body' gap, and it is notable that certain contributions in the Perception and Cognition Round Table - those of Besson and Regnault, of Krumhansl, and of Repp - explicitly attempt to tackle ways in which mind and body may act or interact in the experience of music. The body certainly receives attention from contributors to the Sociology Round Table; Kalisch asserts (p318) that '...to experience music we depend on our body. This is the potential and the guarantee that makes culture remain accessible in principle...', and Martin notes (p337) that there is an 'increasing recognition' in the sociology of music that 'even the most routine and repetitive patterns of behaviour must be understood as enacted and, moreover, that such action is embodied'. But while the body's role in music and in musical experience is acknowledged here it remains unexamined; indeed, given the emphasis (particularly in Martin's contribution) in this Round Table on 'reality' as socially constructed, it's difficult to envisage how understandings of music as embodied

action - music as an attribute of our dynamic, cultural and biological being - might be addressed by sociological understandings of music.

Indeed, Kalisch's notion of the body as the guarantor of the accessibility of culture and Martin's valorisation of embodied actions as particulate entities of culture appear fundamentally at odds with a 'strong' version of social constructionism (such as, e.g., that deriving from Gellner's (1989) notion of 'genetic underdetermination' wherein culture is viewed as completely dissociable from biology). They appear to suggest, rather, that the body is intertwined with culture in some as yet to be determined ways but bracket consideration of bodies as biological entities in favour of consideration of bodies as hermetic agents of social interaction. But the message from the Perception and Cognition Round Table is that an understanding of the implications of the embodied and biologically-grounded mind for music is not only achievable but imperative if that embodied mind is to be anything more than a placeholder in theories of music in culture. This is not to argue that the body as cultural agent is reducible to the body as biological entity but it is to argue that the two are relatable, indeed inter-twined; as Sperber (1999, p. cxv) puts it, 'Today... it is generally agreed among cognitive and social scientists that cultural variation is the effect, not of biological variation, but of a common biological, and more specifically cognitive endowment that, given different historical and ecological conditions, makes this variability possible.'

The notion of human culture and human biology as inter-twined rather than as starkly polarised suggests strongly that the concerns of the two

Round Tables discussed above are not mutually exclusive, but at the least complementary or, more likely, supplementary in respect of each other. It suggests that there is a need for approaches to music as social practices, and approaches to music as activities of embodied minds, to incorporate some mutual understandings into their conceptual frameworks and perhaps into their methodologies. As noted, there is a trend in this direction in the cognitive sciences of music where developmental and whole-life studies are already demonstrating the significance of society in the ecology and dynamics of the musical mind. A reciprocal trend in the social sciences of music might lead to the emergence of still new sister disciplines to musicology.

What this volume demonstrates is that the necessary debates are taking place within musicology. The book's strengths lie in its inclusiveness as a record of IMS 1997, for which the organisers and editor are to be congratulated. However, its utility as a work of reference is marred by the absence of an index other than that of contributors' names. Although there is a huge amount of useful information throughout this volume, it is virtually impossible to extract without reading the whole book and the information it contains is likely to be drawn upon rather less than the quality of its contents would merit. In effect the book represents not so much the proceedings of the congress as a one-to-one map of the event itself. Future editors of such large-scale musicological enterprises would do well to heed the moral of the following abbreviated version of Borges' cautionary tale concerning the desuetude of the Discipline of Geography:

'...and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same scale as the Empire, and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to regard a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found... in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography.'

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