

# Introduction: Music Journal of the Future?

Camille Cecelia Peters

*repercussions* was born in the midst of a struggle, a conflict over the nature and future of musicology. The title of the very first essay of that very first issue is indicative of the times: “Musicology of the Future.”<sup>1</sup> In this essay, which reads less as a manifesto than as a mission statement, Lawrence Kramer stresses:

...that what we call musical experience needs to be systematically rethought, that the horizons of our musical pleasure need to be redrawn more broadly, and that the embeddedness of music in networks of nonmusical forces is something to be welcomed rather than regretted. Those projects can only be achieved through criticism: through the rigorous use of a language that, while conceding its own “rhetorical” and “subjective” character, responsibly seeks to situate musical experience within the densely compacted, concretely situated worlds of those who compose, perform, and listen.<sup>2</sup>

Kramer refers to this type of musicology as postmodern or critical, though it is now more commonly known by the immediately outdated (and outdated) term “New Musicology.” This movement was

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *this journal* 1 (1992): 5-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

incubated, in part, in the pages of this journal. A glance at the early issues shows the journal's affiliation with some of the foremost critical musicologists, not only as contributors, but also as editors and advisory board members.

In the intervening fifteen years, musicology has changed a great deal. The "critical and alternative viewpoints" to which the founding editors staked claim have ostensibly become more mainstream; using the term alternative at present might, as with some early 1990s rock music, raise the question "Alternative to what?" At the same time, the backlash against so-called "New Musicology" has arguably made it more difficult to do radical or experimental work in the field. The mainstream may have widened a bit, but the boundaries have been fortified.

The modes of thinking Kramer cites as increasingly influential on music studies are poststructuralism, neopragmatism, feminism, and multiculturalism.<sup>3</sup> This particular set of disciplines seems very much a product of its time; the list would doubtlessly look different if compiled today. Yet even if updated, a listing of this sort is problematic; it seems to imply equivalence or even interchangeability. However, our point here is not to create a better stew by simply adding more ingredients. If we are to study music and the cultures in which it is created, we should have an array of tools for studying human activity at our disposal. It is up to the individual researcher to determine how best to use them.

Despite all of the attention paid to relations between music scholarship and "outside" disciplines, the most resilient disciplinary barriers have been between music sub-disciplines: historical musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory. These barriers are partly institutional and partly ideological, but in my view, increasingly untenable. Not only subjects but also methods thought to be the domain of one branch of music scholarship are being used by others—for example, archival work in ethnomusicology or field work in musicology. More scholars are doing research that does not fit neatly into prescribed categories, a trend especially visible in jazz and popular music studies. *repercussions*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 5.

will be a forum for such work. The current editors thought it best to reflect this change in focus—or perhaps simply a change in scope—with our new motto, “a journal contemplating many facets of music and scholarship.”

The three articles that follow exemplify diverse approaches to music scholarship. Rather than form a coherent, unified theme, these essays intersect in ways that are not always complementary or comfortable. From the beginning, *repercussions* has been a site for questioning disciplinary principles, diagnosing problems, and suggesting new paths. In keeping with that tradition, Dillon Parmer offers a provocative discussion of the role of performers and performance in musicology, examining how scholarly techniques have (or have not) dealt with the act of making music. The central article explores a medium that is experienced as both performance and unchanging “text”: the music video. In his study of Björk’s “Hunter,” Andrew Robbie does a critical reading based on the work of feminist historian of science Donna Haraway, then weighs his interpretations against on-line comments from Björk’s fans. The concluding work, by comparison, is a rather straightforward historical piece. Francesco Parrino presents a revealing account of the social and artistic networks linking Italian composer Alfredo Casella with Igor Stravinsky, networks whose traces can be found in the pages of the avant-garde journal *Montjoie!*. While this type of music historiography might be what the opening essay indicts, traditional musicological methods still offer valuable insights on music and musicians. And that, in the end, is what *repercussions* strives to do.

As the collection of essays indicates, we are not averse to conflict: intellectual clashes can provide fertile grounds for new ideas and opportunities to hone familiar arguments. In that spirit, we invite readers to respond to these articles. With your help, we will inaugurate an opinion section in upcoming issues. We also invite reviews, not just of written sources, but also of performances, recordings, websites, and other musical happenings. Though exceptions are possible, we prefer that items and events reviewed have been published, released, or have

occurred within the past five years (which, in academic and geological time, still qualifies as current).

To close, a couple of acknowledgments: First, I would like to thank William Quillen and Francesca Rivera, who—despite their absence on the masthead—helped a great deal with long, arduous project of bringing *repercussions* back to life. Finally, I thank the founding editors for leaving us such a rich inheritance. We will do our best not to squander it.