



## **Biocultural Foundations of Music**

**February 5-6, 2022**

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Medienwissenschaft  
&  
Universität zu Köln  
Musikwissenschaftliches Institut

### **Zoom Conference**

This project is an interdisciplinary effort to reconceptualize music as grounded in social interaction, specifically, as a trace of social behavior rather than an object per se. Drawing on fundamental insights from ethnomusicology, philosophy, bio-musicology, music cognition, cognitive science, and neuroscience, the aim of the project is to seek evolutionarily coherent explanations that link the sociality of music as observed in ethnomusicological work with biological, cognitive, neuroscientific and philosophical approaches.

Questions to be explored include:

What is 'meaning' in music and language? Can we conceptualize musical 'form' independently of musical 'content'?

What is the relationship between musicality and music, movement, language, narrative, and culture?

What is the role of sociality in the evolution of musicality and communicative vocality? Is sociality a proper function of musical practices from a teleofunctionalist perspective?

How did shared intentionality emerge (Tomasello), and what is the relationship between musicality and shared intentionality?

What is the ontological status of culture? What are the roles of music within it?

What kind of methodological approach might be appropriate for investigating the cultural evolution of music?

Is (musical) culture and history grounded in social interaction and communication of individuals? What are the neural structures and processes which enable individuals to communicate and interact? Are these neural structures and processes sufficient and necessary to explain human culture, i.e., can we think of culture as grounded in interacting brains? What are the neural bases of social interaction and communication? Are there specific processes and structures for alignment in language or musical communication or should we assume that there is a general device for communication, i.e. some kind of interaction engine (Levinson) for the human music and language capacity? What, then, might be the relationship between specific processes for language or music processing, in particular, those postulated by the mirror system hypothesis (Arbib), also known as complex imitation hypothesis?

In short, how does social interaction serve as the basis for musical practices, and how does it reframe our understanding of the biocultural foundations of music, without reducing complex cultural and social factors to the purely biological?

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**February 5, 2022**

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|---------------|---|
| 1.30pm-2pm    | Introduction and Opening Remarks  |
| 2pm-2.20pm    | Reconsidering Communicative Musicality and its Relation to Music and Language<br>Jin Hyun Kim (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  |
| 2.20pm-2.50pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Elizabeth Tolbert (Johns Hopkins University)   |
| 2.50pm-3.10pm | Break   |
| 3.10pm-3.30pm | What Can Infants Teach Us About Musicality and Sociality? Exploring the Links Between Improvisation, Meaning-Making and Culture<br>Maya Gratier (Université Paris Nanterre) |
| 3.30pm-4pm    | Discussion<br>Chair: Ian Cross (University of Cambridge)  |
| 4pm-4.20pm    | Musical Interactions and the Evolution of Multilevel Social Organization<br>Dor Shilton (Tel Aviv University)   |
| 4.20pm-4.50pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Elizabeth Tolbert (Johns Hopkins University)   |
| 4.50pm-5.10pm | Break   |
| 5.10pm-5.30pm | On the Presumed Proper Functions of Music<br>Matthias Vogel (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen)  |
| 5.30pm-6pm    | Discussion<br>Chair: Ian Cross (University of Cambridge)  |
| 6pm-6.20pm    | Musical Meaning and the Sociality of Musical Form<br>Elizabeth Tolbert (Johns Hopkins University)   |
| 6.20pm-6.50pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Jin Hyun Kim (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  |

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**February 6, 2022**

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| 1.30pm-1.50pm | Music, Speech and Affiliative Communicative Interaction<br>Ian Cross (University of Cambridge)  |
| 1.50pm-2.20pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Uwe Seifert (Universität zu Köln)  |
| 2.20pm-2.40pm | The Social Function of Prosody<br>Daniela Sammler (Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics)   |
| 2.40pm-3.10pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Jin Hyun Kim (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)  |
| 3.10pm-3.30pm | Break   |
| 3.30pm-3.50pm | Social Interaction, Music-Readiness, and the Collective Mind<br>Uwe Seifert (Universität zu Köln)   |
| 3.50pm-4.20pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Elizabeth Tolbert (Johns Hopkins University)   |
| 4.20pm-4.40pm | Challenges in Comparative Approaches to the Origins of Human<br>Language – and Some Potential Solutions<br>Katja Liebal (Universität Leipzig) |
| 4.40pm-5.10pm | Discussion<br>Chair: Ian Cross (University of Cambridge)  |
| 5.10pm-5.30pm | Break   |
| 5.30pm-6.10pm | Concluding Discussion<br>Chair: Uwe Seifert (Universität zu Köln)   |

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