



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?

February 5, 2022

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

February 6, 2022

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