

Editorial: On the Work of Musicology That Lies Ahead

Philip V. Bohlman and Federico Celestini

We had long hoped that we would conclude our editorship of *Acta Musicologica* with a very different “Editorial” from the one we now write. We wanted to celebrate the ways in which *Acta*, supported by the engaged scholarship of IMS music scholars, had risen to the challenges of pandemic and racial reckoning, of enriching the discursive counterpoint of an expanding interdisciplinarity. With each issue *Acta* welcomed new voices and opened as a forum for new debate and discussion. As the final issues of our editorship crossed our desks, we were particularly excited about the able new editorial team, Jen-yen Chen, Arnulf Christian Mattes, and Luisa Nardini, whose conversations with us promised exciting new possibilities for the journal. There was so much to celebrate, and we were eager to turn to these pages to sing the praises of a new song. Now that the moment to sing that new song is upon us, however, we pause, for the moment foregoing celebration. *Acta* does bear witness to much good work over the past dozen years, but we—which is to say, the readers of this journal and international music scholars—have much more work to do, urgent work. In our final “Editorial” we choose, therefore, to turn to the work of musicology that lies ahead.

The work of musicology begins with the recognition that our field can and must engage with lived-in worlds, for it is through such engagement that music becomes a force of agency, inseparable from the political acts of daily life and global encounter. Let us be clear about what we mean: in 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine confronts musicology with a challenge it cannot ignore. The enormity of the human tragedy is only amplified by the cultural destruction in Ukraine. Basic questions of national sovereignty and human survival arise within the music-making of the Ukrainian people, whose voices, in folk and popular music, classical and contemporary performance, chart the history of a nation whose music leaves no doubt about sovereignty. *Musica in tempore belli*: the Russian invasion of Ukraine is just the latest moment of war that musicians and musicologists have been compelled to confront. Its immediacy reminds us that it will not be the last and that musicology’s work at time of war must be carried out with vigilance.

As the IMS and *Acta* have expanded the geographical and political boundaries of musicology in the twenty-first century, so too has it been necessary to recognize the economic and social inequality that heightens the precarity of life along those borders. New borderlands have emerged with frightening frequency as the cultural and class differences between those controlling resources for survival and those in

need of the resources magnify. The borderlands are the sites of new music histories, new types of music histories, those narrated by the journeys of migrants and the flight of refugees. Music ethnographies, too, must take account of mobility and populations in search of resources. Economic inequality parses the world and world music in ways that reveal the faultlines between the musics of the Global South and North. As acute as these musical faultlines have become, nevertheless, we are proud of the ways *Acta* and its authors have sought to heal them. But there is much work to be done.

Musicology is facing the challenges of global warming and its consequences with growing intensity. Ecomusicology, at the beginning more a fascinating suggestion or a basic ethical attitude than a substantially outlined field of research, has undergone a remarkable development in recent years. An impressive series of research questions has been formulated and answered. The methodological and philosophical implications of this research are far-reaching. Ecocritical musicology is already taking a leading role in developing and implementing new paradigms in musicological research. It is primarily concerned with extending relational musicology by considering non-human actors. In addition to applications of Actor-Network-Theory, ecocritical musicology is also about making the ideas of posthumanism fruitful for musicological research. The dramatic climate crisis in the Anthropocene forces us to rethink the relation between human and non-human existence, between nature and culture, between subject and object, and thus to reorient musicological thinking. Such reorientation not only challenges critical thinking in musicology, but also requires a kind of caring engagement for soundscapes and musical cultures that are threatened with extinction. This in turn presents the IMS and *Acta* with further and urgent tasks.

The main task of the IMS today may well be to shape and enable the transition to a global musicology. For a global musicology, we mean the proliferation of musicological voices and the enhancement of the dialogical moment implicated therein. This pluralization involves at least two, often interconnected, dimensions, first, that of the different musicological cultures unfolding in many different countries according to historical, national, and regional traditions, and second, that of different methodologies and research objects constituting the subdisciplinary fields of musicology. *Acta* has seen itself as a forum for advocating global musicology. To this end, we have written several editorials,¹ and our contributors have published fundamental articles,² addressing particularly problematic aspects such as the development of a pragmatic multilingualism and the promotion of a transdisciplinarity capable of overcoming the fragmentation of subdisciplinary discourses, thus moving toward

1 Bohlman and Celestini, "Editorial"; "Musicology and the Discourses of Global Exchange"; "Globalization and Its Discontents"; "Musicology at the Global Front Lines."

2 Nikolić, "Five Claims for Global Musicology"; Chua, "Global Musicology"; Semi, "A (Global) History of What?"

a postdisciplinary musicology. As we reflect on the articles published in *Acta* over the past twelve years, we witness also the ways in which IMS music scholars are themselves realizing the aspirations of a global musicology in the pages of this journal. Many, rather than fewer, disciplines cohabit these pages, and in so doing, they together illustrate the ways different disciplinary traditions can speak to each other and to musicology as a whole. Much work remains to be done to make *Acta*'s function in support of a global musicology even stronger and more effective. We are sure that the new editorial team will make a significant contribution to this and wish the colleagues all the best in this endeavor.

If we conclude our editorship of *Acta Musicologica* with an "Editorial" different from the one we had originally envisioned, it is not because of any sense of resignation because we deemed a fully celebratory editorial inappropriate at this moment in our common global history. The challenges to which the IMS and *Acta* have arisen have been considerable, and they will continue to be so. The work that musicology can and must do, too, is considerable. As it has throughout music histories, global and local, transnational and postdisciplinary, musicology has attuned itself to the voicing of new song, most powerful and potent at the moments of greatest crisis and challenge. We see no silencing of that new song in the work of musicology that lies ahead. So much work does lie ahead, and that is how it should be.

Reference List

- Bohman, Philip V., and Federico Celestini. "Editorial." *Acta Musicologica* 84, no. 1 (2012): 1–3.
- . "Editorial: Globalization and Its Discontents." *Acta Musicologica* 89, no. 1 (2017): 1–3.
- . "Editorial: Musicology and the Discourses of Global Exchange." *Acta Musicologica* 86, no. 1 (2014): 1–3.
- . "Editorial: Musicology at the Global Front Lines." *Acta Musicologica* 92, no. 1 (2020): 1–4.
- Chua, Daniel K. L. "Global Musicology: A Keynote without a Key." *Acta Musicologica* 94, no. 1 (2022): 109–26.
- Nikolić, Sanela. "Five Claims for Global Musicology." *Acta Musicologica* 93, no. 2 (2021): 219–35.
- Semi, Maria. "A (Global) History of What? Three Challenges in Contemporary Music History Writing." *Acta Musicologica* 94, no. 2 (2022): 227–44.

Acta Musicologica will discontinue as a printed journal of the Bärenreiter publishing house with this issue (vol. 94, no. 2, 2022). Going forward, members of the International Musicological Society will still have online access to all past and future issues, and from 2023 onward will also be able to order print-on-demand copies for an additional fee. Interested parties who are not yet members should contact the IMS at: office@musicology.org.