

Disciplining Music

Musicology and Its Canons



Edited by
Katherine Bergeron & Philip V. Bohlman

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The University of Chicago Press

Chicago and London

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Preface

Disciplining Music started as a conversation among friends and colleagues at Cornell University during 1985–86. Stimulating our conversation was, in fact, our interdisciplinary background—that is, the diverse perspectives on music emerging from our diverse interests and professional turfs. Cornell’s Society for the Humanities, with its interdisciplinary agenda, provided the ideal forum for this conversation, and the spirit of intellectual exchange that attracted scholars from other fields into conversations in Cornell’s Music Department eventually led to a mini-conference devoted to the study of the study of music, or the disciplining of music. Philip Bohlman, a Junior Fellow at the Society for the Humanities, hosted the conference (with a little help from his friends) on a Friday afternoon and evening in February 1986. The point of departure for most of the papers and responses was Joseph Kerman’s *Contemplating Music* (Harvard University Press, 1985), though it was obvious that the pressing question of the day was how the individual scholar took a stance vis-à-vis something called “music.” Did music as some sort of phenomenological reality determine the “disciplines,” or did we somehow do the disciplining, rendering music perhaps slippery and elusive but bringing it into a conversation many could share?

The conversation at Cornell continued long after the mini-conference, and we were particularly pleased when the late Edward Morris, Professor of Romance Languages at Cornell, expressed interest in editing the papers as a special issue of a journal of literary criticism for which he was an advisor. We liked the idea but decided that first we would prefer to invite a few others to contribute to the interdisciplinary theme, initially at a special session at the 1987 New Orleans meeting of the American Musicological Society. All along, we had inflected the interdisciplinary questions with issues from outside the field of musicology; and the more we worked on organizing the AMS session, the more we appreciated the range of theoretical positions on

the subject. Presenting papers at the AMS panel (entitled “Disciplining Music”) were the editors of this volume, together with Richard Crawford, Don Randel, and Daniel Neuman, who served as chair.

During the days and months that followed, conversations about the topic proliferated, and new questions entered the fray. Recognizing the need to broaden our project—to include concerns that our panel had neglected—we invited authors from other musical fields to contribute. We make no claims, however, that this book represents every area of musicology and every route to the scholarly study of music; by its very nature, the subject of this book invites additional perspectives. It is the goal of *Disciplining Music* not to leave these out, but rather to provide their advocates with new portals to musicology. Indeed, we regard the book as a beginning, or rather an extension of the conversation among friends and colleagues that began five years ago.

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We owe a debt of thanks to many for making this project possible. Surely, we would not have begun without the support and stimulation of many friends and colleagues at Cornell, especially William Austin, Lenore Coral, Jonathan Culler, the late Edward Morris, and Don Randel. And without the panelists on the AMS “Disciplining Music” session we would not have enjoyed the wide-ranging discussion of musicology’s canons at one of the central forums for the field; we wish to thank Don Randel and Richard Crawford for their contributions on that day, and Daniel Neuman for guiding the discussion.

As for the book itself, Katherine Bergeron wishes to express gratitude to her colleagues at Tufts University, and especially to Jane Bernstein, whose moral support and innumerable practical suggestions over the past two years helped to bring this project to fulfillment. Wye Allanbrook, David Cohen, Marilyn Ivy, Roger Parker, and John Pemberton offered important ideas and criticisms that helped to shape her Prologue as it was being written; her brother Michael Bergeron discovered the *Laymen’s Music Book* in a New York City bookstore and had the good sense to send it to her. Philip Bohlman benefited from the reactions of students in his proseminar on the history of ethnomusicology in the fall of 1989 and from the students in all subdisciplines of music at the University of Chicago, who generously shared in the discussion of the issues in this volume, issues which they willingly accepted as their own. As always, Christine Wilkie Bohlman, who disciplines music so beautifully as pianist and pedagogue, reminded Philip Bohlman of several issues

that he might well have left out of this project, which we eventually came to know simply as “the canons book.”

This collection, of course, would not exist at all without the careful and patient work of the scholars who have contributed the essays in the following pages. Heartfelt thanks to all of them for including their thoughts and ideas in this conversation about the discipline we all share.

Katherine Bergeron

Philip V. Bohlman

O N E

Prologue: Disciplining Music

Katherine Bergeron

Music is the art of measuring well.

Augustine

In Paine Concert Hall at Harvard University, the names of great composers from Monteverdi to Tchaikovsky are painted in fine, Roman capitals. They line the ceiling and look down on the chairs, capturing listeners in a permanent, austere gaze. Our musical Fathers stand in gold leaf, protected, enshrined, preserved (as Frank Kermode would say) in a continuous state of modernity: Beethoven is front and center, flanked by Mozart and Schubert; the rest fall in like so many ranks of troops. It is the Canon at a glance; a solemn spectacle of the disciplining of music.

The essays in this volume explore the ideological and social practices that inform the disciplining of music—understood in terms of our scholarly “disciplines” of historical musicology, music theory, and ethnomusicology—and the connection such practices have to that valued space we call the canon. Authors in some cases propose alternatives to the canon (as the plural in the volume’s title suggests); they raise questions about the nature of its exclusions, about the music that gets in, and the music that stays out. In all the essays, however, a distinct relation obtains between the concepts of canon and discipline, a relation that orders the behavior of social bodies (our scholarly “societies”) and the individuals within them. It may be useful to spell out this alliance in some of its manifestations.

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Let us begin, as our music teachers advised, with scales. If, as we learn from Foucault, discipline is the ordering of bodies, then the scale represents one of its elementary units. For the performer, certainly, practicing scales is the first (and last) measure of instrumental discipline, the source of “tech-

nique," the training of the body into an orderly relation with itself in the production of music. Such training involves a physical partitioning: the hand, the arm, the fingers, the spine are all marked, positioned, according to separate functions. The Suzuki class (perfect model of discipline) playing in unison demonstrates the eerie power of the ordered body.

But playing scales presupposes another, more primary discipline—that of tuning, or playing "in tune." This also implies an ordering of the body, a disciplining of the ear, so to speak; for to play in tune is to make judgments, to mark precise distances between sounds in the act of producing them. Indeed, such a marking of difference points to one of the earliest senses of the word *canon*, whose etymology (from the Greek *kanon*, meaning "rod," "bar," "ruler"; and *kanna*, meaning "reed") refers to a sort of measuring stick, a physical model that both embodies a standard of measure and makes possible its reproduction. The canon is, in this sense, an ideal of order made material, physical, visible.

In the scale, of course, such order is also audible, materialized as a finite set of intervals, perfectly tuned by mathematical calculation, by the ratio—the numerical representation (as the term would suggest) of order, "reason." So compelling, in fact, is this model of rationality—the scale—that it appears in Plato's *Timaeus* as a symbol for the original act of creation in the universe, the "tuning" of the *psyche*, the world soul. Later, in the *Sectio canonis* ("segmentation of the canon") attributed to Euclid, we find the same model scaled down to comprehend the set of distances available on the simplest of instruments, the monochord. Tuned on the single string (a miniature universe), each ratio yields a precise section, a measurement that marks, or "rules," the space, producing the divisions that are the canon's values. The operation thus reveals the essential link between canon and discipline: the tuned scale, or canon, is a locus of discipline, a collection of discrete values produced out of a system that orders, segments, divides.

The canon symbolized on the ceiling of Paine Hall, however distant from Euclid, could be described in similar terms. It, too, represents a scale of values. The Great Men inscribed there are the chosen ones, plucked from a long history of music like perfect notes from the monochord. Students of this history, attuned to its values, learn to reproduce them: to segment in the same way, according to the discipline. This, one could say, is the social impact of the canon. Indeed, once a principle of order is made into a standard, it becomes all the more accessible; translated into a "practice," its values can be internalized. The well-trained monochordist finds the right intervals, certainly, because he practices: he models his behavior after the canon he is at-

tempting to reproduce. The “fact” of the canon thus implies a type of social control—a control that inevitably extends to larger social bodies as individual players learn not only to monitor themselves but to keep an eye (and an ear) on others. To play in tune, to uphold the canon, is ultimately to interiorize those values that would maintain, so to speak, social “harmony.” Practice makes the scale—and evidently all of its players—perfect.

A very different, though significant, example of this same disciplinary logic turns up in an introductory music textbook written in the 1930s by the pianist Olga Samaroff, the first wife of conductor Leopold Stokowski. The third chapter of her *Laymen’s Music Book* offers a lesson in music history that underscores, tellingly, the socializing effects of the canon just described. It begins innocently enough, presenting a general account of the scale through the Greeks, then goes on to conclude—abruptly—that “not one” among thirty thousand children who had studied music in New York schools during the previous twenty-five years “had ever been brought before a juvenile court for delinquency” (Samaroff Stokowski 1935:62). This unexpected report is amplified with further evidence drawn from the author’s own “survey of penal institutions in the United States.” It is the bandmaster of the Southern Illinois Penitentiary who has the last word:

There is not one member of our band to-day who ever played a note of music before coming here. Of the many band men who have been paroled, but one has been returned on either a new charge, or for parole violation.

I would not urge musical training as a crime preventive, but the fact remains; trained musicians do not commit crimes, and men who receive musical training in penal institutions stay out when released. (Ibid:64)

All this in a chapter entitled “Why Scales?”

The apparent leap of logic that takes Samaroff from the scale to the prison, in a single bound, may owe something to popular Platonic wisdom concerning the moral character of the modes, and the benefit of music to a free society—ideals that are predictable enough given a context of the democratic music-appreciation “movement” that burgeoned in the United States between the wars.¹ But this testimony to low rates of recidivism among trained prisoner-musicians also tells another story. Indeed, to consider the prisoners’ rehabilitation within the penitentiary band is to discover something like the musical equivalent of Bentham’s Panopticon, that revolutionary model of eighteenth-century discipline whose primary power, as

described by Foucault, lay in the ability to maintain inmates under a constant (and centralized) surveillance. Power, as Bentham himself maintained, “should be visible and unverifiable.” Hence prisoners knew of their potential to be seen at all times by an agent stationed in a central tower, while never knowing the exact moment of being seen. The effect of this disciplinary technology, in which the observer remained invisible to the observed, was radically to extend the power of the gaze. “He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it,” Foucault explains, “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power . . . he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles” (Foucault 1979:202).

Like any large instrumental ensemble, the band relies on the same sort of panoptical arrangement: players are seated (out of convenience, we say) in curved rows around a central podium, completely visible to the conductor who stands above. Yet the discipline of the band is not so much visual as aural: the conductor *listens*. Here the player is entrapped by an acoustic constraint; he cannot escape his own audibility. And, as with the Panopticon, he never knows precisely the moment when the conductor—this master of acoustic surveillance—may be listening to *him*, picking out his instrument from the dense ensemble of musical sounds. The effect, as we all know, is to cause players to assume more and more responsibility for their own performance: to play in tune, at tempo, on cue, controlling their part both individually and in relation to the whole. Inmate-players learn to conduct *themselves*, so to speak, according to the canons of performance they share.² As a field of audibility, a type of acoustic enclosure, the band thus implicates the musician in a network where acts of mutual surveillance serve to maintain the musical standard.



The scholarly “fields” represented by authors in this book are, of course, enclosures in very much the same sense, distinguished from one another principally by the nature of the conduct they foster. A field is, in other words, a site of surveillance, a metaphorical space whose boundaries, conceived “panoptically,” are determined by the canon that stands at its center. As Foucault’s model suggests, it is not really the watchman in the prison’s central tower (nor, by analogy, the conductor of the band or orchestra) that maintains order among those enclosed, but rather what such figures, seen or unseen, *stand for*: a “higher” authority, a “standard” of excellence, all ideals embodied in what we call the canon. It matters little whether we conceive of this canon as a scale, a body of law, or a pantheon of great authors and their

works; the effect in every case is the same. The canon, always in view, promotes decorum, ensures proper conduct. The individual within a field learns, by internalizing such standards, how not to transgress.

“Trained” scholars know this all too well. Like rehabilitated prisoners (bleak thought), they learn how to negotiate their field of scholarship—how not to commit crimes—by yielding to the law of that field, measuring their activity accordingly. In this sense the canon remains (as its etymology implies) a “measuring stick” for a discipline, a guide that keeps the scholar well within scholarly limits. Don Randel plays on this sense of the term as he explores the “canons,” or range of instruments, contained within the scholar’s “toolbox,” his metaphor for the standard working methods of all fields of musicology. Such tools, fashioned from the discipline itself, serve to maintain its limits, ensuring “standards” within the standard repertory. Among the most prevalent of these measuring devices, as Randel suggests, are notation, which fixes the musical text as a permanent value, and biography, which predicates those texts upon the figure of the composer, subsuming all value under the sign of his name—an operation Bruno Nettl ponders in more detail through a critique of two principal figures of Western musical culture.

Yet the limits of the field—the boundaries that, by marking an “inside,” signify the presence of order—indicate also an exterior, a space beyond the enclosure where values can no longer be measured. Two essays in the collection address figures positioned on the margins of the discipline, writers whose work has openly challenged such limits. Robert Morgan considers some of the more dissonant voices from the margins in his treatment of Busoni, Cowell, and—most significantly—John Cage, by whose example he proposes a restructuring of the canon to account for the pluralism of contemporary musical life. Ruth Solie hears another sort of voice in Sophie Drinker’s *Music and Women*, a work “alien to the musicological tradition” that nonetheless sought a place for women in that tradition by revising not musicological method but the very concept of “music” and its function in society. Solie interprets Drinker’s resistance to discipline (evident in the “unorthodoxy of her methods”) as a resistance to history, particularly the music history of the 1940s—a reading that causes her to consider the alternative disciplines in which a women’s music might be inscribed.

Philip Gossett and Gary Tomlinson demonstrate a similar concern for music on the margins—for musical works that have been denied a place in histories—in examining the status of works within an individual composer’s canon. Gossett addresses this question more or less directly, as he critiques

the apparent “facts” of history that have marginalized Rossini’s Neapolitan operas. Through analysis of individual works, he clears a hypothetical space for Rossini’s *Napoletana* in the canon of Italian opera, while questioning the very conditions under which such spaces are assigned value. The “facts,” he contends, demand a revaluation of the processes by which histories are written and of the canons that come with them. Tomlinson’s essay considers the problem the other way round, in a sense, as Miles Davis becomes a sort of pretext for a broader meditation on the nature of canon formation—a meditation inspired by, among other things, recent criticism of African-American literature and theories of culture. He invokes as a central concept the notion of “signifying,” the rhetorical figure of the “double-voiced” in African-American discourse, in order to illuminate the peculiarly double nature of Davis’s jazz-rock fusion. His purpose, however, is not so much to secure a central place for this supposedly marginal music as to imagine an entirely different sort of canon: one whose values would be (like those of “fusion” itself) contingent, discursive: determined through a continuous dialogue among a plurality of voices.

This imaginary “canon” would require, of course, a reorientation of the discipline that it is supposed to represent. With “dialogue” the central activity, it is no longer a question of maintaining fixed limits, of segmenting according to well-established rules, but of constantly negotiating and renegotiating these boundaries. The locus of surveillance, so to speak, moves from the center to the margins in this alternative discipline; there is not a single canon constantly in view, but rather a continually changing idea of what that canon might be. Indeed, the canon, quite contrary to its nature, becomes an open question. The theorists Richard Cohn and Douglas Dempster entertain a similar logic of reversal in their examination of music-theory canons—although their essay radically shifts the focus, moving us from the notion of a canon that governs a general field (the set of works that embody value) to the related idea of an individual canon, or “rule,” by which such value is specifically measured and controlled within a discourse. They examine the rule of “unity” that governs theoretical discourse about tonal music, while focusing attention on what they consider to be “the most sophisticated and powerful account of musical structure,” namely, Schenkerian theory. In proposing a revised model of tonal unity Cohn and Dempster obviously affect a different stance from that of other authors in this book: their critique, it would seem, comes not from without, but from within the system; they seek not so much to reject as to refine a discipline whose self-evident “power” remains intact. This refinement could be described as an attempt to

reconsider the Schenkerian gaze, to turn away from Schenker's fundamental structure (which, to quote the master himself, monitors the middleground and the foreground "as a guardian angel watches over a child") in order to contemplate the surface of the musical work. In other words, Cohn and Dempster attempt to relocate "surveillance" (to use our term) within the Schenkerian discipline itself. Their alternative yields a new metaphor for musical structure: the composition becomes a "network" rather than a strict (and more problematic) "hierarchy"; hence, analytical readings are no longer fixed, but pluralistic, located in an activity analogous to Tomlinson's dialogues—a "shuttling between the surface and underlying compositional parameters."

By redefining this relation of center to margin, by shifting value away from some putative deep structure toward the complex surface of a musical work, their model functions not just to revise Schenkerian theory, but, in fact, to preserve for future music theorists the canonicity of Schenker and, by extension, the very notion of the masterwork. My own essay offers a kind of historical critique of this phenomenon of canon preservation—though again from a very different perspective—in the story of the nineteenth-century revival of Gregorian chant by the Benedictine monks of Solesmes. Most significant for this story is the decentering of Rome as the sole locus of authority for the Gregorian canon, through the institution of a marginal "school" at Solesmes whose purpose it is to control the chant repertory—what we might call, by analogy, its complex "surface," as presented by the manuscripts. Such control is maintained by a rigorous counter-discipline involving a whole range of scholarly expertises: grammar, philology, paleography, photography. My essay essentially shows how this new interpretive discourse, resistant to Vatican authority, saves the canon by reinvesting it with "modern" values.³

But the essay also points to a significant moment in the history of musicology as a discipline, a time during which the scholarly technology that Randel describes is perhaps first developed and tested. That this marginal "field" eventually becomes central is implied, of course, by the very title (and theme) of our collection. Philip Bohlman refers to this centrality from another viewpoint in his own historical essay, which takes us through one more transformation of the field: the emergence of ethnomusicology as a bona fide discipline in the 1950s. The "challenge" of this new discipline can be construed, once again, as a shifting of the locus of surveillance. Yet this shift has as its goal neither the dismantling nor the preserving of an established canon (such as the canon of Western art music), but rather a concern

for the ways such canons—and the very notion of “music”—are constituted by a discipline. A certain self-consciousness is thus written into this new discipline: what is to be preserved, scrutinized, evaluated, is, as Bohlman argues, not a body of music (the masterworks of the world, as it were) but the body of writing that constitutes the ethnomusicologist’s discourse about that music—a music whose status within its own culture has little to do with such writing. This scrutiny within the discipline fosters a sort of hyper-surveillance, in which the disciplined is always reflecting back on itself. The modern ethnomusicologist cannot act simply according to an established “standard,” since, for her, that standard is itself a question about what should constitute the standard for a given culture. To submit to this discipline is thus to be trapped in a gazed-at gaze, enclosed in something like a hall of mirrors.

This condition of modern ethnomusicology emerges, perhaps, as a natural consequence of having rejected the values of another discipline—indeed (to return to our opening discussion for a moment), of having rejected the scale itself. For, not accidentally, it was the scale, in all of its possible manifestations, all of its tunings, that formed an essential point of departure for the ancestors of the discipline, the so-called comparative musicologists. Figures such as Hornbostel, Ellis, and Stumpf reserved a space in music scholarship for the diverse (and exotic) musical cultures of the world first of all by defining their scales, and then by showing how they related to those of Western music (see Blum 1991 and Schneider 1991); they attempted, in other words, to measure “other” musics against the standard set by European music. Yet this was precisely the attitude the later generation of scholars turned against in the 1950s, in their desire to examine music of the “other” on its own terms. Modern ethnomusicology comes into being at the moment the scale is brought into question.

A similar sort of questioning is evident among the essays in this book. Certainly, the condition of music in a “post-tonal” age, as discussed by Morgan, implies the denial of a clear musical standard—a rejection, it could be said, of the complacency associated with the scale. Sophie Drinker, too, adopts a comparable stance as she attempts to meet women’s music on its own terms, to resist the impulse to judge it against standards established for men’s music, men’s history. To resist the scale in this way is, then, to question its values; at the same time, however, it is to imagine another world of values that might reside in between—to squint, as it were, into those unmarked spaces in order to discover what the discipline has *not* accounted for. The pre-

sent volume can be read as an attempt to bring such spaces into sharper focus.

NOTES

1. Samaroff's book was written exclusively for her Laymen's Music Courses, Inc., in New York City and includes, as suggested study aids, a list of RCA Victor recordings at the end of every chapter. See Horowitz 1987 for a recent study that evaluates this movement in light of one of its principal heroes, Arturo Toscanini.

2. Foucault notes that Bentham himself had tried, though unsuccessfully, to include such a means of acoustic surveillance in his elaborate architectural model. The system was to be "operated by means of pipes leading from the cells to the central tower. In the *Postscript* he abandoned the idea, perhaps because he could not introduce into it the principle of dissymmetry and prevent prisoners from hearing the inspector as well as the inspector hearing them" (Foucault 1979:317 n. 3). The prison band, in fulfilling this project, becomes in effect the "Panacouston" Bentham couldn't quite imagine.

3. See Kermode 1985:67–93 for a discussion of similar incidents of canon preservation within literary and Biblical criticism.

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T W O

The Canons in the Musicological Toolbox

Don Michael Randel

In the hefty tome titled *Inside Macintosh: Volumes I, II, and III*, copyrighted by Apple Computer, Inc., a section of the first chapter is headed “The Toolbox and Other High-Level Software,” and it begins as follows:

The Macintosh User Interface Toolbox provides a simple means of constructing application programs that conform to the standard Macintosh user interface. By offering a common set of routines that every application calls to implement the user interface, the Toolbox not only ensures familiarity and consistency for the user but also helps reduce the application’s code size and development time. (Apple Computer 1985, I:9)

We could perhaps transpose this to the domain of musicology as follows:

The Musicologist’s Toolbox provides a means of constructing dissertations and scholarly articles that conform to the standard Musicological interface. By offering a common set of techniques that every dissertation and scholarly article employs to implement the Musicological interface, the Toolbox not only ensures familiarity and consistency for the scholar but also helps reduce the time and effort required to produce the scholarly product.

Each of us shows up for work lugging a toolbox, and the contents of this toolbox have a great deal to do with what kind of work we can do and what the work will look like when we are finished. Apple Computer, Inc., designed and made available their Toolbox precisely so as to ensure that pro-

This paper draws together and expands on remarks made at the annual meetings of the American Musicological Society held in New Orleans in 1987 and in Baltimore in 1988 as well as in a lecture given for the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University in 1986 and subsequently published (Randel 1987).

grams written for the Macintosh by anyone and everyone would look familiar and “friendly” to the user (with pull-down menus, icons, clicking, and all the rest). We often engage in a similar enterprise in our teaching—when we claim to provide our students with *the* “basic tools of scholarship.” We tend to constrain not only how things can be studied but what can be studied at all. We sometimes give the impression that other things are not even worthy of study.

The Musicological Toolbox developed in the context of a certain canon of works. Once developed, it began to act just as surely to define and maintain that canon. By *canon* I mean primarily the canon of acceptable dissertation topics. This is not the same as *the* Canon or *the* Repertory or the Standard Repertory in general, by which we might mean the works preserved and transmitted by institutions of high culture, such as concert halls and opera houses. The musicological canon is for the most part a subset of this larger canon, though the relationship between the two has changed considerably in the last few decades and the fit between them is now much better than it was even just twenty-five or so years ago.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., writes of the relationship of Afro-American literature to the literary canon and cites Paul de Man’s phrase “resistance to theory” (Gates 1986–87:345–46; de Man 1982). This phrase seems to me to resonate in our profession in ways that neither Gates nor de Man will have had in mind but that nevertheless capture much of what is at issue here. What is it about the Musicological Toolbox that has made it such a powerful force in keeping certain subjects out, including at times subjects that have the status of high art in our own culture? Or, what is it about the theoretical frame of musicology that has made so many subjects resistant to it? Here we may think both of the theory of musicology as a discipline and of music theory in the more usual sense in which we recognize it as an important tool of musicology. The resistance to theory of so much music has too often seemed like a fault of the music. Instead, we perhaps ought to think about the possible limitations in our theory, in both senses. As the Spanish proverb says, “If a book strikes one in the head and it makes a hollow sound, it is not always the fault of the book.”

Of all of our tools, musical notation surely ranks first in importance, and it is central to much of our theory. Indeed, it has often been the basis for the initial sorting of all possible musics: All of music is divided into two parts—written traditions and oral traditions. The professional study of music is then similarly divided: Written music, which turns out to be principally Western

art music, is studied by musicologists. Everything else is studied by ethnomusicologists. Notation also provides the principal foundation for two of our favorite concepts: the work itself and the individual composer.

Much of the energy of musicology has gone into identifying, fixing, preserving, and studying “the work itself.” And, of course, our belief in such a thing as “the work itself” is what makes possible the creation of the list of such things that make up the canon. But notation is not sufficient for a definition of “the work itself.” Indeed, notation is simply not self-sufficient at all. It must always be decoded by an informed reader who brings to bear on it his or her own experience. And that experience is the product of a parallel oral tradition. This interdependence of written and oral traditions characterizes notation in the twentieth century just as surely as it characterizes non-diastematic notations of the Middle Ages. In consequence, the status of “the work itself,” as something fixed in notation for all of time, is seriously undermined and with it many of our traditional disciplinary and methodological boundaries. Musicology and ethnomusicology begin to look a great deal more alike when we recognize that there is no such thing as a work without a context.

If the supposed “work itself” is a product of the act of decoding—that is, reading or listening—so is the composer as a creative force. Our image of the composer as a creator emerges only from our reading or listening to his or her works. This decoding makes our relationship to the composer rather different from the traditional one in which the composer is viewed as a Romantic genius who dispenses immutable works for all of time. And it might make us question the importance of the figure of the composer as a force in the formation of our canons. Anonymity has most often made us rather uncomfortable when it comes to musical works. Anonymous works constitute a problem and are likely to be thought not worthy of study for their own sake. Even when there is no hope of identifying a single composer, as in some medieval repertories, for example, we seem to prefer to study music for which we can imagine more clearly the possibility of an individual creator. Thus tropes, for example, have attracted a great deal more scholarly attention than the introits to which they are attached. If we can imagine shifting some of our attention away from the figure of the composer in our traditional canons, we might be moving in the direction of expanding our canons to include music for which such a figure has never been especially important.

Our work reflects not only our reliance on—and perhaps undue belief in—Western musical notation. It reflects some of the particular features of that notation as well. Western musical notation is much better at dealing

with pitch than with any other aspect of musical sound. For all of its weakness at dealing with pitch, it is downright crude with respect to duration and worse yet with respect to timbre. Not surprisingly, our work on pitch organization overwhelms our work on rhythm, to say nothing of timbre. And not surprisingly, repertories that place rhythmic and timbral features more obviously on an equal footing with the organization of pitch tend to be undervalued or simply excluded from our canons altogether.

What we usually refer to and teach as music theory has much more to do with pitch than with other aspects of music, and this is perhaps most true of some of the very best of our theory and analysis. Here it is quite easy to think of repertories that could be described as “resistant to theory.” Even the highest art music of France and Italy, to say nothing of England and Spain, might very well prove resistant to analytical methods developed with a view to demonstrating the tonal coherence of the masterpieces of certain German composers. This is unfortunate only if such resistance is translated into the belief that such music does not deserve the most serious attention that we can give it as scholars.

A special set of tools within our methods of theory and analysis is the set of forms and/or genres with which we approach music. These have most often been regarded as normative or as classificatory and thus have tended to exclude as much as they have included. They tend to obliterate the significant detail even of works that they appear to embrace, and they encourage us to ignore works and repertories that they do not comprehend. The problematical in this context is at best interpreted as mixed or hybrid. A preferable approach to musical genres might resemble the approach of Hans Robert Jauss to literary genres, which favors “a processlike determination of the concept of genre” and holds that genres “cannot be deduced or defined, but only historically determined, delimited, and described” (Jauss 1982:80).

The forms and genres in terms of which we often describe music are also entangled with the forms and genres of our scholarship and with the intellectual tools that we apply to the study of history. Our views of history very often do not spring from the study of the individual works that history has left for us but instead determine which works we shall choose to study and how we shall study them. If our view of history is to avoid the radical skepticism of some reader-oriented criticism on the one hand and the falsifications of inherited historical labels on the other, we shall have to locate the experience of individual works at the center of our efforts and in relation to an appropriate historical horizon.

Another whole set of tools in our Toolbox also concerns writing, though

not necessarily just the writing of music. These are our philological tools. These are very old tools and very important tools and especially influential tools. As long as scholarship was defined largely in terms of these tools, the only legitimate subjects for study—the canon of acceptable dissertation topics—were those embodying philological problems. This restriction made common cause with a belief in the self-sufficiency and transparency of modern notation to favor the study of early music and to view music that survived in a continuous performance tradition as not altogether suitable for scholarly study.

Within the last couple of decades, there has, of course, been a great musicological leap forward. A number of scholars working on the Middle Ages and Renaissance began to concentrate more of their own efforts (and those of their students) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Works of the nineteenth century particularly, which had always been part of *the Canon* or *the Repertory*, were admitted to the canon of acceptable dissertation topics in musicology. But the tools that were applied to this newly expanded canon were largely the old ones. That is, the musicological canon expanded principally to the extent that new repertoires could be made to respond to traditional methods that privileged concepts such as “the work itself” (immutable and editable) and the composer as creative genius (whose biography and compositional process might be investigated). The canon expanded, then, not to include a greater diversity of works so much as to appropriate and dominate a greater number of works and make them behave in similar fashion. Italian operas could be treated just as if they were German symphonies or Netherlandish motets.

Of course, even on this basis, much music can be and is still kept out of the canon. Not only is it resistant to our theory, but it is recalcitrant. Jazz, however, is an interesting case, for it might be thought to be something of an exception. Jazz was perhaps the first subject outside the tradition of Western art music that began to be studied by people who did not call themselves ethnomusicologists. But this was because it suited musicologists and their methods in two important ways. Although notation was not central to what was thought to be most important about jazz, the recording industry created and preserved vast quantities of “source” material that could be described and catalogued. And jazz prized individual creative genius. Jazz scholarship, then, turned out to be like much other musicological scholarship: strong on archival and source-critical work, somewhat less strong on biography (much of it rather anecdotal), and not much in between. It could be argued that what was essential about jazz to both its practitioners and its listeners

was largely lost in the musicological shuffle and that the application of foreign tools did not in this case illuminate a subject, as scholarship claims to do, but rather falsified it.

The question is, once again, whether this constituted merely an expansion of the canon or a case of attempted appropriation and domination. The expansion of the canon is more like a struggle for empire. It is a political move as much as an aesthetic one, for it serves first of all to incorporate foreign goods into the economy of the academy.

The struggle over the canon shows itself most clearly not with respect to non-Western music (which may be thought of as attractively exotic) or jazz (which can be made to behave like Western art music), but in the domain of Western popular music—the music that by any quantitative measure overwhelms all other kinds in our society. Here the traditional Musicological Toolbox seems destined primarily to continue to keep the musical riff-raff out rather than to broaden the horizon of our investigations. The study of this kind of music will require a bigger and more varied set of tools. But some of these tools will enrich the study of our more traditional subjects, too—including some of the subjects that we have admitted to our canon under false pretenses.

Popular music forces some issues to which we have paid only lip service and some others that threaten musicology's most ingrained habits. In this domain, "the work itself" is not so easily defined and certainly not in terms of musical notation. The composer/author is not always clearly identifiable and does not leave the kind of paper trail that our tools can investigate readily. Rhythm, timbre, and performance styles, for which we have only primitive vocabularies, tend to overwhelm harmony and counterpoint as significant elements, with the result that traditional musicological discourse quickly takes on a dismissive cast with respect to popular music. Producers, engineers, and marketing people may rival our traditional subjects—composers and performers—in their contributions to the character of "the work itself," whatever that turns out to be. Popular music aims at specific audiences, and those audiences, both as groups and as individuals, use popular music as a means of identifying and defining themselves in society (Frith 1987). In this way, popular music forces the study of social context at a level sometimes talked about—but rarely undertaken—with respect to Western art music. Finally, popular music foregrounds its own temporality. It claims importance only for the here and now, and thus is bound to threaten an academic community that represents and justifies itself as preserver and transmitter of enduring values.

We might content ourselves with the view that popular music is simply an underdeveloped specialty: in an age of specialization, it is simply not what we musicologists do, and not doing it does not constitute a fault of the profession. But popular music represents only the extreme case of something that we do a lot of the time, and in this sense it ought to be at least a lesson to us. Even in the domain of Western art music, we can think of repertoires that “don’t look like much on the page,” that rely for their effectiveness on the particular circumstances of place, audience, and performance and that have in consequence often been (to put it gently) undervalued in our profession.

We should not abandon the strengths that flow from the formalist character of some of our traditional tools. But as we increasingly recognize the contingent status of even our favorite notated masterpieces and at the same time approach repertoires in which “the work itself” and “the composer” may not be readily definable, the focus of our energies must inevitably move in the direction of the listener: away from the process of composition and toward the process of hearing; away from the presumably autonomous text and outward to the network of texts that, acting through a reader or listener, gives any one text its meaning. This shift will open the way to—indeed, will demand—kinds of musical criticism and analysis that have not yet made contributions as significant as we should expect: Marxist, psychoanalytic, and feminist, for example.

Feminist criticism has a particularly important role to play in our discipline, for it confronts directly the issues of canon formation described above and invites the collaboration of Marxist and psychoanalytic studies. That women composers are almost wholly absent from the canon of Western art music is clear enough. The reasons for this are of two general types, though the two are not easily disentangled. The first type results from women’s historical condition as an oppressed class without equal access to political or economic power in society. It lends itself to analysis in Marxist terms. The second type derives from beliefs about the nature of sexual difference and from the dominance of male-produced and male-centered constructs in Western thought. It lends itself to analysis in biological, psychoanalytic, and psychosocial terms. But what can any analysis of the reasons suggest about a proper response to the gender-related facts of the canon? This is to ask, “What should the agenda of a feminist musicology be?”—a musicology that, in at least some of its aspects, might be practiced by both men and women.

First there is, of course, the labor of discovery and exposure. The names

and hitherto-silent voices of women composers of all periods must be recovered for the benefit of teachers, students, and ordinary listeners alike. But a great deal more must be done as well. However great and important the labor of historical research and recovery, we should not be content to address only access to power and to prominence through a kind of affirmative-action program that does not take some account of gender difference and that does not question the gender-related implications of what has enshrined the canon that we propose to expand. Rather than make well-intentioned exceptions to a criterion of excellence that we claim to find embodied in the canon, we must challenge that traditional criterion. For this criterion, which is formulated only vaguely if at all, has been the ultimate weapon—not least because of its very vagueness—in the male-produced, male-dominated arsenal that has so long kept women out. Until we have asked, “Excellence according to whom?” we should remain suspicious of any canonizations that take place in its name.¹

Two issues come into play here. The first is traditional musicology’s traditional imperialism. I have claimed that musicology’s canon has been determined largely by the methods with which musicology has studied its objects. Musicology has typically added repertoires to its domain by a process of colonization that imposes traditional methods on new territories. After years of regarding Italian opera as peripheral, if not frivolous, we discovered that it too had sources and even sketches to study and edit and that it too could be investigated in terms of large-scale formal coherence. We appropriated jazz not because of what was most interesting or characteristic about it, but because it too presented us with a body of source material and variants to classify.

Music by women composers occupies, in this respect, a position precisely analogous to that of, say, most French and Spanish music of the nineteenth century. It was composed by (and perhaps for) people different from—foreign to—those who officiated at the canonizations that have dominated us. We cannot expect to understand any new repertoire other than the traditional ones if we are not prepared to invent new methods appropriate for its study. The canon of Western art music as we know it was formulated by a body of specific individuals, all of whom happen to have been men. Until we interrogate that fact—and them—we cannot suppose it either an accident *or* a phenomenon of dispassionate nature that this canon includes only the works of men.

The second issue in play here derives from the ways in which traditional notions of canon rest on certain traditional notions of the work of art. And

this is where we must begin our agenda. Music—precisely because it is so manifestly not a single universal language—lays bare the respect in which the work of art is a function of the reader/listener. The author/composer is powerless in the absence of a reader/listener who can situate the so-called work in an appropriate matrix of the other texts/compositions on which it depends for its meaning. Once we recognize the status of the reader/listener in the production of the work of art, we necessarily confront differences among readers/listeners, of which gender is surely the most inescapable. We undermine a certain brand of pious humanism in which great works reveal great and eternal truths, and we validate the process of reading/listening as a woman alongside the reading and listening that we have been taught by men.

With respect to gender, two approaches to the canon are thus opened. First, how does a woman listen to the traditional (male-dominated) canon? And second, how might listening as a woman expand that canon, specifically to include those works that are the product of composing as a woman?² These questions raise the spectre of yet another canon that is less often mentioned but even more thoroughly male dominated. This is the canon of music theory (and, one might add, even criticism). Our present difficulty in naming canonical women composers is surely exceeded in considerable measure by our difficulty in naming women contributors to that body of theoretical writing that surrounds and thus largely defines the canon.³ This is not because the existing body of theory has exhausted what we all know to be prominent features of musical works.

Listening as a woman implies writing about music as a woman, whether the music in question is composed by a man or by a woman. Even if we decline to import in their entirety French feminist criticism's notions of *écriture féminine*,⁴ we need to recognize the possibility that gender might be expressed in ways of writing about music as well as in ways of writing music. This possibility bears on what I have called the canon of acceptable dissertation topics in musicology, which is simply our way of imposing on the young and powerless our own canonical tendencies.

If we foreground sexual difference in our approach to canon formation, we confront the need to address the nature of that difference. Feminist literary criticism has shown something of the variety of terms in which this difference might be framed and their consequences for the project of such criticism. Feminist musicology should not settle for any less variety in its theoretical orientation or in its practical projects. Above all, it should not cede to inherited male authority the theoretical frame in which its discourse is inscribed.⁵

There is one more set of tools that deserves mention here because of its widespread use in our thinking about most everything and because of the particular marks that it has left on our writing about history. This is the whole set of binary oppositions in which we frame so much of our discourse: high culture and popular culture, sacred and secular, constraint and freedom. The list is very long. Of these, constraint and freedom is surely the opposition at the heart of the master trope of music-historical writing—the trope in terms of which we have rewritten every story in history. It is the story of freedom won through throwing off the constraints (or worse) of the sacred, the courtly, of some form or genre, of convention, tonality, the barline, the work itself. And the freedom won by one generation quickly becomes the constraint against which the next generation will struggle to win its own freedom.

This opposition is just another version of the opposition between good and evil. And it is, as Fredric Jameson observes in the wake of Nietzsche, rooted in turn in the opposition between the self and the Other: “What is good is what belongs to me, what is bad is what belongs to the Other” (Jameson 1981:234). In the Western democracies since the late eighteenth century—but particularly in the United States of the twentieth century—the version that opposes freedom to constraint has risen to unequalled status. And *we* occupy the pole of so-called freedom. Our study of history is then a search for people like ourselves—people defined in the struggle of freedom against constraint, good against evil, the self against the Other. This is the story in terms of which we have fashioned our period labels, for “period formulations always secretly imply or project narratives or ‘stories’” (ibid.:28). The Renaissance is only the most striking case of a period defined as being inhabited by people who were in certain essential ways like us. The same story can be told in one way or another for what marks the end of the Renaissance, or for the Romantic period, or at the level of generations or genres or individual composers.

How does this narrative device affect what we study or how we study it or what is admitted to our canons? It functions by identifying certain periods, composers, and works (not always the same ones, depending on the particular story being told) with constraint, evil, the Other, while identifying others with freedom, good, the (our)self. And as Derrida shows, in all such oppositions, one term is the dominant one, the other marginalized: “In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), occupies the commanding position” (quoted in

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2. Elaine Showalter writes about literary studies as follows: "Feminist criticism can be divided into two distinct varieties. The first type is concerned with *woman as reader*. . . . The second type of feminist criticism is concerned with *woman as writer*" (Showalter 1985a:128).

3. Literary theory has been much debated in feminist studies generally and much resisted in some quarters on the grounds that it is by its nature patriarchal. Rita Felski's view of the matter might prove most useful to musicology: "I suggest in contrast that it is impossible to speak of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in any meaningful sense in the formal analysis of texts; the political value of literary texts from the standpoint of feminism can be determined only by an investigation of their social functions and effects in relation to the interests of women in a particular historical context, and not by attempting to deduce an abstract literary theory of 'masculine' and 'feminine,' 'subversive' and 'reactionary' forms in isolation from the social conditions of their production and reception" (Felski:2).

4. See, for example, Jones 1985.

5. Jonathan Culler puts the matter with respect to literature in ways that might serve musicology as well: "The task of feminist criticism . . . is to investigate whether the procedures, assumptions, and goals of current criticism are in complicity with the preservation of male authority, and to explore alternatives. It is not a question of rejecting the rational in favor of the irrational, of concentrating on metonymical relations to the exclusion of the metaphorical, or on the signifier to the exclusion of the signified, but of attempting to develop critical modes in which the concepts that are products of male authority are inscribed within a larger textual system" (Culler 1982:61).

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