

Editor's Note

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Needless to say, this has been a tumultuous year for *Current Musicology*. The Covid-19 outbreak has created unprecedented difficulties for the journal. Our editorial board—once a tight-knit community of graduate students based on Columbia's campus—has been physically disconnected for the first time in the journal's 55-year history, its members flung to every corner of the globe by the pandemic. Even those who have remained in New York have found themselves unable to convene in person. Our networks of scholarly support—which once seemed inextinguishable—have been relegated to makeshift online spaces, poorly adapted to the needs of such a vibrant and complex intellectual community.

And there has been so much pain. So much fear. So much loss. Yet, in the midst of this unfathomable human tragedy, the journal's editorial board has come together to produce this issue. It is the product of countless hours of labor, undertaken in the wake of crisis after crisis. I wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to all the members of the editorial board who have volunteered their valuable time to review a manuscript at this unpleasant juncture. The pandemic has created new and unanticipated demands on your (already packed) schedules, and yet so many of you have undertaken reviews with enthusiasm and rigor. There are members of the editorial board who I have not yet been fortunate enough to meet in person, and who have still volunteered their time for the journal nonetheless. I would especially like to thank those who have been magnanimous enough to review multiple manuscripts this semester—your tireless efforts have helped to ensure the timely publication of the upcoming issue.

I am deeply indebted to Laina Dawes, outgoing editor, and Mary Catherine Stoumbos, outgoing reviews editor and subscription manager, for helping me transition into this editorial role during this difficult time. I would also like to thank subscription managers Gabrielle Ferrari and Imogen Wilson, and assistant editor David Farrow for all their work in preparing this issue. And, above all, I would like to thank David C. Newtown, Johanna Lopez, Erica Lockhart, Gabriela Kumar, and Professor Ana Maria Ochoa of the Columbia

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University Music Department for their tireless administrative assistance—it is thanks to their patience and perseverance that *Current Musicology* has managed to weather the adversities wrought by this harrowing year.

As the pandemic rages on, I have been increasingly overcome with an irrepressible feeling of anger—anger at the senseless loss of life, at the senseless loss of livelihoods, and at the utter preventability of all this suffering. This nation’s leaders—in coalition with the ruinous forces of global neoliberalism—have conspired to treat the American people like so many sacrificial lambs, brought to slaughter on the altar of capitalistic greed. This is something that we must all be angry about.

Yet, it has been helpful—even therapeutic—to channel all this pent-up emotion, all this unquenchable outrage, into a more constructive outlet. Having the opportunity, in light of all this destruction, to help facilitate the production of knowledge through this journal has been incredibly rewarding for me. This issue of *Current Musicology* stands in defiance of those noxious forces which have helped this pandemic to wreak unparalleled devastation through the violence of their inaction.

As the pandemic severs more and more of our colleagues from the scholarly institutions that once fostered their intellectual activities, high-quality, open-access scholarship is becoming more important than ever. The pandemic and its economic aftershocks have rendered the academy even more exclusive than it was before: academic careers are now reserved only for the most well-resourced, the most privileged. The challenge, then, is to be as generous we can with our knowledge, to share our scholarship as widely as possible, to open ourselves up to the world. *Current Musicology* is proud to take up this challenge. In the face of so much darkness, the humanities light our way forward.

The interminable chaos of the pandemic has somewhat overshadowed what was due to be the year’s biggest musicological event: the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth. The sescentennial began in a flurry of controversy, with calls to ban the composer’s (near ubiquitous) music from concert halls in favor of more equitable programming. *Current Musicology* is thrilled to be publishing two articles which not only mark the Beethoven anniversary, but also shed new light on the controversies which continue to haunt the composer’s legacy.

Campbell Shiflett's contribution examines just one of the many musicological *querelles* which have sprung up in response to Beethoven's music. He lays bare the uses and misuses of Adrienne Rich's 1973 poem "The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven Understood at Last as a Sexual Message" in the hermeneutic disputes that surrounded Beethoven's Ninth Symphony during the heyday of the so-called "New Musicology." Part reception history, part poetic analysis, Shiflett's study seeks to disentangle Rich's poem from the musicological baggage that it has accrued through these infamous debates, entreating us to examine it with fresh eyes, to appreciate its (rarely acknowledged) complexities and ambiguities. It is not just the musicological reception of Rich's "Beethoven" poem that is at stake in Shiflett's article, but the act of interpretation itself and its various musical and literary fault lines.

Elaine Fitz Gibbon is concerned with an altogether different set of Beethoven-related quarrels. Her article reveals that many of the debates and controversies which surrounded Beethoven's 250th anniversary were very much present during the composer's 200th anniversary. Examining Mauricio Kagel's 1969 film *Ludwig van*, Fitz Gibbon deftly unpacks the ways that Beethoven was celebrated and critiqued in a divided Germany in the lead-up to his bicentennial. She argues that Kagel's critique of Beethoven fetishism was inextricably linked to a critique of bourgeois ethno-centric nationalism and rooted in Kagel's own experiences of diaspora. For Fitz Gibbon, Kagel's film offers fertile ground for rethinking our treatment of Beethoven today, calling for us to forgo celebration in favor of renewed dialogue around the politics of the composer's legacy. I was fortunate enough to see the author present this research at the (virtual) annual meeting of the American Musicological Society and I am thrilled that we are able to offer it, in article form, as part of this issue.

These timely reception histories are followed by two path-breaking repertory studies on genres of music that have been historically neglected in music-theoretical inquiry. In a sweeping survey of over 90 different film and television scores, Brad Osborn identifies a (formerly innominate) voice-leading schema—the subdominant tritone—which, he argues, is axiomatic to the expressive capacities of these genres. For Osborn, the emotional power of the subdominant tritone lies in the tension between its two possible resolutions. The listener is torn between hoping that the leading note will resolve upwards to the tonic and hoping that the fourth above the bass resolves downwards to the third. Cinephiles will recognize this unique musical device from many a heartbreaking movie moment. The author informs me that this article is the product of four

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years of research—*Current Musicology* is proud to publish the fruit of this herculean effort.

Ben Duinker’s study of form in hip hop is similarly impressive in its scope. Duinker’s argument is both analytical and economic in nature: he suggests that the mainstreaming of hip hop over the last twenty years has inexorably transformed its formal conventions. Duinker identifies the origins of a number of important hip-hop forms in African American vernacular music-making, before charting the ways in which these forms have changed to resemble the formal paradigms of more mainstream musical genres. Many readers will find Duinker’s ground-breaking taxonomy of hip hop’s various formal components to be a vital addition to the growing body of scholarship on this long-neglected genre. I should add that the articles by Duinker and Osborn are both accompanied by extensive appendices which will undoubtedly prove invaluable to future scholars of these repertoires.

Finally, *Current Musicology* is proud to publish a colloquy from Project Spectrum, titled “Strengthening the Pipeline,” on equity and diversity in pathways to music academia. Project Spectrum are, of course, trailblazers in this area and their indefatigable efforts have already helped to prompt a much-needed reckoning in music academia on issues of race, gender, sexuality, and disability. They are a graduate student-led organization and a dynamic scholarly community, committed to shifting the exclusionary culture of the musicological establishment. I would encourage readers who are unfamiliar with their work to check out their website and to follow them on social media. The colloquy is organized and edited by Anna B. Gatdula, one of the co-founders and co-chairs of this impressive collective.

“Strengthening the Pipeline” is notable for its diversity of perspectives: a college professor reflecting on equity in the undergraduate music curriculum; a professor and his student making the case for alternative pathways and compassionate mentoring in music pedagogy; an incisive critique of the mental health crisis in the neoliberal university; and an indictment of ableism in music academia from an independent scholar. All of these amount to a powerful condemnation of the culture of discrimination in music studies and a clarion call for palpable action on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the academy. The colloquy contains gut-wrenching personal testimonies from these scholars, which might prompt us to reflect on the barriers that prevent scholars from under-represented and under-privileged populations from entering music academia.

As I write this editor's note, a mob of white supremacists is storming the United States Capitol in an act of fascist insurrection. In light of these events, Project Spectrum's colloquy seems more urgent than ever. It is clear that we have so much work to do.