An Introduction to Music Studies

Why study music? How much practical use is it in the modern world? This introduction proves how studying music is of great value both in its own terms and also in the post-university careers marketplace. The book explains the basic concepts and issues involved in the academic study of music, draws attention to vital connections across the field, and encourages critical thinking over a broad range of music-related issues.

- Covers all main aspects of music studies, including topics such as composition, music theory, opera, popular music, and the economics of music.
- Provides a thorough overview of a hugely diverse subject, from the history of early music to careers in music technology, giving a head-start on the areas covered in a music degree.
- New to "neume"? Need a reminder about "ripping"? Glossaries give clear definitions of key musical terms.
- Chapters are carefully structured and organized enabling easy and quick location of the information needed. Each chapter contains:
  - a chapter preview presenting a clear and concise introduction to the topic
  - a bullet list of key issues, showing at a glance the aims and content of the chapter
  - a chapter summary at the end of the chapter, providing a useful revision tool
  - a list of key discussion topics to help broaden thinking on the subject.

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An Introduction to MUSIC STUDIES

Edited by

J. P. E. HARPER-SCOTT

and

JIM SAMSON
Contents

List of illustrations page ix
Notes on contributors x
Preface xiii
Features of this book: a guide xiv

Introduction
J. P. E. Harper-Scott 1

Part 1 Disciplines 5

1. Music history
Jim Samson 7
Art versus history 8
Stylistic or social history? 9
Oral histories 12
Narratives in history 14
Hidden agendas? 18

2. Music theory and analysis
Rachel Beckles Willson 25
Introduction 25
What is analysis for? 27
What is theory for? 31

3. The sociology of music
Katharine Ellis 43
Introduction 43
Sociologies of music 44
The problem of “high art” 47
Are geniuses made, not born? 50
“Art worlds” and the music business 51
“Cultural capital,” social status, and identity 52
4. The psychology of music
   **John Rink**
   - What is psychology? 59
   - What is the psychology of music? 60
   - What do music psychologists do? 62
   - How does “the musical mind” work? 66
   - How do we learn music? 68
   - How do we create music? 70
   - What is expressed in music and how do we perceive it? 72

5. Music aesthetics and critical theory
   **Andrew Bowie**
   - Introduction 80
   - Analytical and Continental aesthetics 80
   - Subjective and objective 81
   - Aesthetics and history 82
   - Judgment 83
   - Absolute music 85
   - Form and content 86
   - Music, politics, and meaning: critical theory 87
   - “New musicology” 89

Part 2 Approaches to repertoire

6. World musics
   **Henry Stobart**
   - Introduction. World Music(s): exclusions and inclusions 98
   - Who studies world musics? 100
   - Does music have a place? 104
   - Can world music be mapped? 106
   - Sounding authentic? 108
   - Can we trust our ears? 109

7. Early music
   **Stephen Rose**
   - What is early music? 119
   - How far can we recreate the music of the past? 121
   - Music for the Church 123
   - Secular music 126
   - Notation and the role of the performer 128
   - The changing status of the composer 130
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David Charlton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opera as entertainment and ritual</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing the workings of opera</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing in the present</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opera’s messages</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singing as persuasion</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From semiotics to process</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Concert music</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erik Levi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patronage and funding</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concert repertory in the nineteenth century</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The twentieth century and beyond</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Bowie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History and context</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvisation and performance</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jazz as “critical music”</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jazz and the academy</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Popular music</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Eva Leach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is popular music?</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do we study popular music?</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Music in film and television</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julie Brown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dividing film music for study</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approaches to textual study</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does it fit into the history of music?</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3</td>
<td>Music in practice</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Musical performance</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tina K. Ramnarine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is musical performance?</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musical performance as experience, process, and embodied practice</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musical performance as a mode of interaction</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who performs?</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

Learning musical performance 227
The contexts and functions of music 230
Social and political dimensions of musical performance 231
Studying performance in higher education 233

14. Composition
JULIAN JOHNSON 236
Studying composition 237
Working methods 238
Composers, performers, and audiences 243

15. Music technology
BRIAN LOCK 250
Introduction: what is music technology? 250
How is it studied? 251
Composition 252
Recording 257
Composition and production 258
Composing with sound 259
Making music in home studios 261
Multimedia, film, the Web 261
Careers 262
Courses 263

16. The economics and business of music
NICHOLAS COOK 267
Snapshot of 1825: Beethoven’s Ninth and the music business 267
The rise and fall of the music profession 271
Giving music its due 274
Classical music in the marketplace 278
The music business between past and future 283

Index 291
Illustrations

Fig. 2.1 Meter in Mozart: Piano Sonata in A K331, first movement. page 32
Fig. 2.2 Classical sentence structure. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1, first movement. 32
Fig. 2.3 Analysis of Haydn, Piano Sonata Hob. XVI/35, I. From Allen Cadwallader and David Gagné, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press. 34
Fig. 2.4 The octatonic scale. 35
Fig. 2.5 A moment from Wagner’s "Ride of the Valkyries." 38
Fig. 3.1 “Good music unappreciated.” From *The History of Music* by Geoffrey Brace, illustration by Martin Aitchison. Copyright (c) Ladybird Books Ltd, 1968. Reproduced by permission of Ladybird Books Ltd. 49
Fig. 6.1 Various “exotic” instruments, from Michael Praetorius’s *Syntagma Musicum* (1619). 101
Fig. 6.2 Primary pitches, gestures, and melodic contour of Raga Yaman. 111
Fig. 6.3 Diagram and notation of a jula jula panpipe melody. 112
Fig. 6.4 Jula jula players. Photo: Henry Stobart. 113
Fig. 8.1 Wagner through a giant horn. From *BBC Music Magazine*, July 2004. Reprinted by permission. 138
Fig. 8.2 BIFF cartoon. Reproduced by permission of Chris Garratt. 138
Fig. 11.1 Semiotic fields or zones of inquiry in popular music. 191
Fig. 13.1 RHUL’s Gamelan Puloganti, South Bank Centre, London, June 2007. Photo: Tina K. Ramnarine. 229
Fig. 16.1 Title page of Beethoven’s Three Piano Trios, Op. 1 (1795). 268
Fig. 16.2 Robbie Williams’s PPL page (source: PPL AGM presentation 2007, http://www.ppluk.com/ppl/ppl_cd.nsf/agm-presentation/$file/PPL%20AGM%20Presentation%202007.pdf). 278
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This book, written entirely by academic staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, is designed as a companion for music students, and aims to answer the questions “how and why do we study music?” It is targeted at first-year university and college students, non-majors who are considering going on to a music major, and first-year music majors, but is also useful for “A”-level and high-school students who are preparing for a music course and need an overview of the field. It explains the basic concepts and issues involved in the academic study of music, provides an introduction to the principal areas of study, discusses approaches to a wide range of repertoire, and considers important aspects of the practice of music today. In particular, through its cross-references, it draws attention to vital connections across the field. The book is thus designed to be used as a background text and to encourage critical thinking over a broad range of music-related issues.

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Features of this book: a guide

1 Music history

JIM SAMSON

Chapter preview

This chapter asks what we mean by music history and why we study it. It considers some of the different kinds of history that can be, and have been, written, ranging from the stylistic history of musical works to the social history of how those works came to be written. It looks at the different strategies demanded by the study of music in different periods, in different places, and for different audiences. It looks at some of the tools, methods, and sources historians use to learn about musical practices in the past, and considers some of the conventional categories they employ to build an order in history. They often refer to musical "traditions," for example, they invoke period terms such as "Baroque" and "Classical." The chapter also addresses some of the overt and hidden agendas found in different types of historical writing. It queries whether some aspects of music history have been neglected in favor of others at different times, and it asks how much we can learn by considering the reception of music through the centuries. It further considers how the study of music history is supported by, and may in turn illuminate, some of the other categories of musical study discussed in this book.

Key issues

- How can we do historical justice to works of music, given that they are part of our present?
- Is music history shaped primarily by composers and scores, or by the cultural conditions which demand and/or enable musical performance?
- What kinds of evidence can traditions provide?
- What is a "type" of music? How do we create a network of stories around the essentially faceted facts?
- How useful is it to divide music (including nations) into types?

Feature boxes offer illustrative case studies to clarify the meaning of important themes, and to give a taste of the wider contexts you will explore in your degree.

Box 6.2 Raga Yaman

Yaman is one of the most widely taught ragas in Hindustani music. It is a scale of 7 notes, which is also the basis of many other ragas. The raga is characterized by a particular melodic contour, which is used to create a sense of coherence and unity in the musical piece. The melody is typically played in a slow, steady rhythm. The raga is also associated with spiritual and emotional qualities, such as devotion and love, and is often used in devotional music.

Chapter previews provide a clear and concise introduction to the topics covered, together with a list of key issues to be discussed in each chapter.