



音樂系

Department of Music
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mok Hing Yiu Visiting Professor 2018 Colloquium Series

4:30 – 6:00pm
LG01, Hui Yeung Shing Building
Chung Chi College, CUHK

Speaker

Prof. Nicholas COOK

Mok Hing Yiu Visiting Professor
Emeritus Professor of Music
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Socialities of Music

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Anatomy of the Encounter:
Debussy and the Gamelan

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The Other Classics:
Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven

In English
Free admission, free seating

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Socialities of Music

Synopsis

Music has always been a social activity, something people do together. Only with the development of sound recording did the private consumption of music become common, and even then it happened only slowly. Yet academic thinking about music in the historical west has generally prioritised individual, subjective experience, and so has failed to engage fully with the social dimension that gives music so much of its significance. On top of that, traditional academic approaches to music have revolved around an idea of style that represents it as a kind of impersonal force with its own historical momentum: musicologists don't talk as glibly as they used to about the evolution of the sonata principle, for example, but the reifying assumptions that treat music as a kind of thing rather than a human practice are still in place. I am addressing these issues in a book-in-progress that poses the basic question: what might musicology look like if it put people first? In attempting to answer this I focus on what might be called the relational practices of music. That includes, for example, record production (which, like fashion photography, is more than anything a craft of handling people) and music therapy, which employs music as a means of creating relationship and gaining knowledge of disturbed clients. But I argue that it also includes music more generally: multiple practices of music, both everyday and exceptional, involve creating relationships with other people, and in so doing, creating and acting out personal identities that are forged in relation to other people.

In this lecture I explore issues of musical community in a variety of contexts. I begin with choral music ranging from community choirs and barbership singing to the natural voice movement, and with the particular sense of musical togetherness they engender; I compare that with ideas of music's utopian potential for the reformation of human relationship that are built deeply into the culture of jazz, and that played an equally important role in the culture of string quartet performance that developed in early nineteenth-century Germany. I also trace the way in which musical genres from string quartets to Asian traditional musics and contemporary American composition employ specific technical devices to create intimate interaction and empathetic attunement among participants, resulting in what I call closely knit webs of sociality. Finally I interrogate the idea of participation, which many have seen as the indispensable basis of music's social effects, creating shared experience in a way that concert music—the presentation of music before a non-participant public—cannot. I disagree. All social activities heighten the sense of belonging, however briefly, to an affective community. But what makes music special is the degree to which you participate even when you are in the audience or—more importantly—when you consume music, as most people do today, via the digital media of sound or video recording. Music matters in the modern world because it engages contemporary media in the creation of musical socialities.

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Anatomy of the Encounter: Debussy and the Gamelan

Synopsis

The oldest chestnut in the history of musical encounters is the influence on Debussy's compositional style of the Javanese music he heard at the Expositions universelles that took place in Paris during 1889 and again in 1900. In this paper I revisit the ideas of both encounter and influence by looking again at Debussy and the music he heard, and by populating the story with others who also heard the Javanese music and left their own, differing responses.

The issues of influence and encounter are interdependent. Musicological thinking on influence tends to be fuzzy, and behind it there is often an assumption that only needs spelling out for its absurdity to be evident. Neil Sorrell writes that the word 'influence' implies a changing of course, whereas influence can only be genuine if that course is already set: 'with Debussy', he says, 'a much more fruitful word would be *confirmation*... What he heard in 1889 confirmed what he had, at least subconsciously, always felt about music'. In other words, influence can be authentic only if it is not influence at all. There is something right about this approach: its focus on preparedness, in other words what it was that conditioned Debussy to respond to Javanese music in the way he did. What is missing is the idea of an encounter that resulted in something that was not simply in Debussy, and not simply in the music he heard, but that emerged out of the combination. In short influence involves transformation, and it is in the process of transformation that the core of encounter lies.

The paper is constructed like a pair of Russian dolls, and influence is the outer one. The inner one is a narrative of other responses to the same performances that gave rise to transcriptions or compositional recreations. There is for example Julien Tiersot's proto-ethnomusicological approach (he spent a whole day sitting on stage with the musicians to try and gain an understanding of the music from the inside), which reveals a—to us—strange association between the ideas of early music and world music. But I particularly focus on the 'Danses javanaises' that Louis Benedictus composed for souvenir booklets at both the 1889 and 1900 fairs, analysis of which reveals quite different approaches to intercultural composition; it also shows that the composition in which the influence of Javanese music on Debussy is most direct, *Pagodes*, is more closely modelled on Benedictus than on the original. What emerges from the comparison is the extent to which *Pagodes* falls into the established French traditions of exotic representation.

As for the outer doll, I see the key to the encounter in the principles of Fuxian counterpoint that Debussy had internalised as a student at the Paris Conservatoire. In some obvious respects nothing could be more different than species counterpoint and gamelan music. Yet there are underlying affinities between them, in particular the principle of composition in layers defined by rhythmic diminution—something that becomes increasingly important in Debussy's later style. In this way the combination of an unfamiliar music and a quite specific mental receptivity gave rise to the process of creative transformation that defines both musical influence and the intercultural encounter.

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The Other Classics: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven

Synopsis

It was back in the 1990s that Scott Burnham showed how what he called the 'Beethoven Hero' paradigm had set the agenda for subsequent musicological and theoretical thinking about the classical tradition, and even about music more generally. Despite the diversifying projects of the 'New' musicology of the 1990s and the assimilation of influences from ethnomusicology and performance theory, I argue that in many ways our thinking about this repertory—the core repertory of historical musicology—remains skewed, and one of my aims in this paper is to recover aspects of Viennese classics to which the 'Beethoven Hero' paradigm made us deaf.

I take as my starting point the practices of collage embodied in digital multimedia—practices almost diametrically opposed to those of musicology and theory as they developed within the 'Beethoven Hero' paradigm—and show the extent to which they also apply to music of the classical tradition. The system of topics, for example—conventionalised systems of signification associated with different musical contexts, genres, and modes of performance—has always been sidelined by a musicology oriented to structure and the aesthetics of autonomy, and yet it is central to a period musical culture based on rhetoric; much of Mozart's music is more productively heard in terms of collage and juxtaposition than in terms of structural unity. But topics were made inaudible by a modernist performance style that prioritised unity, and in this way performance becomes an integral dimension of my project of recovery.

It does not stop there. These highly unclassical values can be discovered deeply embedded within the traditional narratives of historical musicology, and I illustrate this through a deconstructive reading of a chapter by Daniel Heartz that underlines the ubiquity of collage, juxtaposition, and hybridity within late eighteenth-century Vienna and more generally the unfamiliarity of the period soundscape. In this way I seek to normalise the repertory of what in an article from 2003 I called the 'other classics', in particular Beethoven's music from around the time of the Congress of Vienna. Nicholas Mathew interprets these works as war-time anomalies, but I see them as a major stream within a continuing musical culture that was much more eclectic than the 'Beethoven Hero' ever allowed us to believe.

In its place I propose a counter-narrative of eighteenth—and nineteenth—century listening within which to situate documented period responses to classical music that were excluded from the history books. This culminates in an account of a 2015 concert that I heard by chance in Vienna: a reconstruction with period instruments and in the original venue of the 1813 premiere of both the Seventh Symphony and *Wellingtons Sieg*. In the strange acoustic of this marble-clad hall all those excluded responses suddenly made sense, and for the first I felt I really heard the other classics.

About the Speaker



Nicholas Cook is Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge, having previously taught in Hong Kong, Sydney, Southampton, and London. His *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (1998) is published or forthcoming in sixteen languages. Among his more recent books, *The Schenker Project: Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (2007) won the SMT's Wallace Berry Award in 2010, while *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*—based on his work as Director of the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM)—appeared in 2013. His latest book, *Music as Creative Practice*, is just about to appear, and he is currently finalising a book provisionally entitled *Music, Encounter, and the Relational*, for which he was awarded a British Academy Wolfson Research Professorship. A former editor of *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, he is a Doctor of Humane Letters of the University of Chicago and was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2001.

