

PODCAST REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS DE BALADODIFFUSION

Sound Expertise. 2020–2022. Hosted by William Robin. Produced by D. Edward Davis.

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Musicologist William Robin dedicates *Sound Expertise* to highlighting music scholars and their work. Robin's main goal with the podcast is to explore the role of music research(ers) in society. In the second season's first episode, he invites both early career and senior musicologists to examine sound and society. Most of the episodes take a critical lens toward topics in music, focusing on the expression of interlocking identities and oppressions in musical sound, musical communities, and musical pedagogies.

The selection of episodes reviewed here demonstrate a relatively representative sample of scholars and topics featured in the podcast but with a particular focus on musicology, organized thematically rather than chronologically. The episodes run between thirty minutes to just over an hour, and are produced by composer D. Edward Davis. Each episode has a corresponding transcription that listeners can access on the *Sound Expertise* website, which is easy to navigate and contains all of the episodes and transcriptions, contact information, and links to items of interest that come up during the interviews. The podcast is also available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Stitcher.

Contextualization is perhaps one of the most common threads among the musicologists Robin interviews. The first

episode features Erika Supria Honisch. Honisch points out that all sounds and musical practices are highly contextual: “The same sounds can be heard radically differently” depending on the preceding event, the ritual context or the listener's identity. Season 2 concludes with an interview with Richard Taruskin, a self-described contextualizer. Taruskin explains how musicology was narrowly defined in the 1960s, when contextualized music studies were becoming influential. More than just contextualizing, though, Taruskin elucidates the vital place of skepticism in musicology. When asked about a musicologist's role in society, he answers, “To be a contrarian. My role is to be a skeptic, my role is to not let anything pass unexamined.”

Taruskin also addresses the convergence of musicology with ethnomusicology. He tells Robin, “It's ‘both and’ — do you look at music internally, or externally? No, no, you look at it both ways ... don't just look at the social side of things; see if you can relate that to the way the music actually works internally. And if you can actually use music analysis to prove a point about society, well, that's terrific — it means that you are doing some kind of integrated work.”

The sort of integrated work Taruskin describes is precisely what Jessica A. Holmes undertakes in her work on d/Deaf listening. In Season 2, Episode 5, Holmes outlines her work with the d/Deaf community, showing how sound can be conceptualized as multi-sensory, and how diverse musical experiences are within one community. Likewise, Paula

Harper undertakes deeply integrated work in her scholarship on music and sound on the internet. In Season 2, Episode 7, Harper explores the virality of Rebecca Black's much-hated music video, "Friday." Though "Friday" was oft-covered, Harper discovers that one of the reasons consumers despised it is because of Black's young, white, girlish voice. Violent, misogynistic responses and threats on Reddit positioned Black's voice as especially displeasing, pointing to a broader cultural attitude towards girls' voices as inauthentic, particularly in pop music.

Season 1, Episode 8, with scholar Marian Wilson Kimber, delves into another practice related to gender: elocution in the 19th century. Elocution — the practice of reading poetry aloud accompanied by music — has been largely ignored in music history. Kimber offers valuable insights into canon formation: 19th-century ideas of "high art" are not the same as today; what we might call middlebrow was considered high art, including song repertoire by women, character violin pieces, and accompanied recitation. Kimber's work shows that underestimating women makes our music histories incomplete.

Kimber's understandings of canon relate to Loren Kajikawa's and Ellie Hisama's critical interventions on music pedagogy. In Season 1, Episode 2, Kajikawa interrogates the "possessive investment" in teaching and playing western music, an investment based on racial exclusion wherein some types of music are legitimized while others are denounced. And in Season 1, Episode 13, Hisama shows that analytic methods should be appropriately contextualized and "very much generated by the composer and her music." On curriculum development, Hisama advocates

for bringing non-canonical pieces into the classroom.

Hisama's and Kajikawa's interventions are built on the work of the "new musicologists," including feminist musicologist Susan McClary. The first episode of Season 2 is dedicated to McClary's career, scholarship, influences, and impact on the field. Along with her colleagues Rose Subotnik, Larry Kramer, and others, the "New Musicology" arose because they "all wanted to create a bridge between history and analysis, and that was much more important than any kind of ideology or any kind of cultural theory." Robin asks McClary what it was like when her landmark book *Feminine Endings* came out. At feminist conferences, McClary says that her ideas were liked but certainly not radical. She did not expect the book would emerge so prominently in musicology. She explains that it was her detractors who sensationalized it and made it "into a huge deal," such that she received death threats, saying, "It was really kind of extraordinary, the violence of the response." Her interview is more autobiographical, teasing out her personal experiences in the field at a time of radical change.

Robin gives space for other scholars to share their personal experiences in a bonus episode entitled "Our Pandemic Year," which is in the format of a voice-mail call-in, welcoming pandemic-related stories from music researchers. A musicology PhD student describes experiencing extreme Zoom fatigue; a musicology professor shares being deeply proud of her students' adaptability. An anonymous, young academic shares how they lost a tenure-track job due to a COVID-related hiring freeze. In their words, "Perpetual job instability is the death of mental

health. Living in full-time fight or flight mode when you are your sole provider, not knowing what the next year might bring if anything at all ... comes with a loss of professional dignity and sense of self-worth." Their comments speak to the structural failure of academic institutions in which contingent employees struggle to find career stability, let alone pay the bills. A securely-employed academic describes how the pandemic marked an "insidious 'hurry up' culture for creators in these last months ... [an] overwhelming expectation that we're all just sitting around waiting to make something — anything — now!" This bonus episode pays homage to cultural grief and serves as a meditation on music researchers' roles during times of crisis.

As a form of public scholarship, Robin undoubtedly realizes his statement that "it's time that more music scholars communicate to the public about their work." But which public? While some of the episodes are relatively jargon-free and could be understood by a non-specialist audience, a number of episodes would require a dictionary at hand for those unfamiliar with the discipline. This has less to do with Robin's intentions than with how music researchers are trained to discuss their work. Many of us have not had to communicate our scholarship outside of academic settings, let alone in an aural-only format. Robin's intervention demonstrates a particular need for all music researchers to begin taking seriously feminist scholars' calls to engage in public scholarship (Ketchum 2022). Only then can musicology fulfill any potential it may have to "change the world." 🌱

REFERENCES

Ketchum, Alex D. 2022. *Engage in Public Scholarship! A Guidebook on Feminist and Accessible Communication*. Montreal: Concordia University Press.

Melanated Moments in Classical Music. 2020-ongoing. Hosted by Joshua Thompson and Angela Brown. Produced by Ezra Bakker Trupiano and Adam Fonacier with Classical Music Indy.

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Conversations about racial representation have risen in recent years in parallel with increased awareness of systemic anti-Black racism. The podcast *Melanated Moments in Classical Music* deals with the work of Black people in classical music, and is a timely resource for musicians, music professionals, and music lovers. The podcast, which premiered in March 2020, is co-hosted by pianist and music sociologist Joshua Thompson and opera singer Angela Brown. Thompson's and Brown's animated dynamic enlivens discourse about music history. Their goal in the podcast is to "introduce and reintroduce [listeners] to melanated masterpieces written and performed by, for, and about Black people" (Thompson and Brown 2020a: 00:19).

The podcast is a production of Classical Music Indy, with episodes produced by Ezra Bakker Trupiano and Adam Fonacier, and theme music composed by Laura Karpman. Their website offers a wealth of information, including a summary and