

POPULAR MUSIC AND ITS THEORIES ENCOUNTERS – CHANGES IN PERSPECTIVE – TRANSFERS

**27th Conference of the Gesellschaft für Populärmusikforschung (GfPM)
17th Annual Congress of the Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie (GMTH)**

17–19 November 2017 (Fri-Sun)

University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Kunstuniversität Graz / KUG)

Conference chairs:

Christian Utz, Institute 1: Composition, Music Theory, Music History and Conducting

André Doehring, Institute 16: Jazz Research

Call for Papers

The engagement with popular music in music studies has fundamentally challenged the role of music theory in the context of popular music research. Since the 1970s, a diverse discourse on the theory and analysis of popular music has taken place in the English-speaking world, reinforced by the Popular Music Interest Group, founded in 1998 within the Society for Music Theory (SMT). Such developments do not, however, preclude a continuing “lack of [...] intellectual interface between music theory and the rest of the popular music studies community” (Lacasse 2015). Moreover, in the German-speaking world, focus on theoretical-analytical questions is still relatively rare in popular music research and music-theoretical studies are only occasionally dedicated to popular musics.

However, differentiation in both popular music research and music theory is on the rise, and potential synergies cannot be overlooked. The two disciplines share an interest in aspects such as connecting (structural) analytical insights with listening and performance perspectives, identifying musical models as the basis of many popular *and* “art music” styles, as well as the desideratum of exploring the interaction between schemata, structural models and sound. Last but not least, impulses from jazz theory and jazz research can foster these mutual investments, for example, by contributing to theories of structure and form of popular music.

The first joint congress of GfPM and GMTH aims to pursue these synergies, building on past events of both societies. The decade-long history of the Institute for Jazz Research at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz and the first GMTH conference in Graz (on “Music theory and Interdisciplinarity”, 2008), offer further testament to the potential of this collaboration. This meeting between GfPM and GMTH is intended to expand discussion to a broader corpus of repertoire and to motivate new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation.

The Congress pursues these goals in four thematic sections and one free paper section.

Section 1: Analyzing Popular Music

Keynote: Nicole Biamonte (McGill University, Montreal)

The basic question of the “analysability” of popular music and related questions of the appropriate methodology can hardly be regarded as solved. These questions include, among others, the tension between working with transcribed materials and with sound and/or video documents, between production- and reception-oriented perspectives, and between musical text and sociological context. Terminological questions, the comparability of models across genre boundaries and historical epochs, as well as the fundamental question of what analysis can offer in the broader field of exploring popular music, remain controversial.

Possible topics:

- *the relationship between analysis and performativity
- *the relationship between genre, form and compositional technique
- *methods of sound- and reception-oriented analysis
- *analytical approaches to voice and singing
- *the relationship between music-theoretical and sociological analysis
- *use of software and big data to analyse popular music

Section 2: Improvisation and Theory: Convergence and Divergence

Keynote: Martin Pfleiderer (University of Music “Franz Liszt” Weimar)

Improvised music has always posed special challenges to theory and analysis. It is also a well-known fact that there is a broad overlap in this area between popular and “art music” practices and genres. On the one hand, there are historical compositional concepts, which, like the partimento tradition, were closely based on sophisticated knowledge of model-based improvisation. On the other hand, we observe developments in the history of music, which repeatedly broke with the tradition of musical notation in favour of improvisatory-performative dimensions. The main challenge seems to be to combine (still contested) transcription methods with historically informed concepts founded on media studies and listener-response aesthetics in order to capture the peculiarity of improvised musical practices.

Possible topics:

- *theory and analysis models of jazz improvisation
- *Baroque and Classical cadence improvisation
- *fantasia-style preludes and interludes in solo recitals
- *“aleatory” vs. “improvised” concepts in new music
- *“free improvisation” and free jazz
- *jazz improvisation as a model in other styles of music, from classical to pop
- *performing improvisation – how do we know if something is “really” improvised?

Section 3: The Travels of African-American Music

Keynote: Catherine Tackley (University of Liverpool)

This section deals with the circulation and reception of African-American musics and their interactions with musical structures. “Travel” is primarily understood to mean musical transmission (e.g. song families), a result of journeys – voluntary or involuntary – and of the commercial dissemination of music and musicians. The global passage of African-American music within different receptive contexts led, for example, to an “inverted” understanding of the blues as allegedly authentic mourning music or to racist-sexualized readings – “disseminating” African-American bodies, so to speak. Though African-American music is practically omnipresent, it is still underrepresented in music theory and popular music research.

Possible topics:

- *does an alternative music theory exist for African-American music?
- *repetitive form in African-American music as an analytical challenge (e.g., funk, hip-hop, house)
- *which historical and current passages between jazz, other African-American musical genres, and popular music can be identified?
- *what sort of encounters, transfers and changes in perspective can be discovered or developed with neighbouring disciplines, such as postcolonial studies?
- *historio-cultural aspects of the reception of African-American music in Europe

Section 4: Transfers between Popular Music and “Art Music” Past and Present

Keynote: Hartmut Fladt (University of the Arts, Berlin)

Transition and transfer of structural elements between jazz, pop, and art music did not begin in the 20th and 21st centuries: strands of reciprocal assimilation of techniques and aesthetics, traceable to the Middle Ages, only became increasingly interwoven in the 20th century. There exists a broad repertoire of musical practices (musical models, harmonic or melodic progressions, timbre and instrumental techniques, vocal colours, performance practices, etc.) – partly, but not exclusively, through shared systems of reference such as “tonality” or “modality”. These practices not only transgress traditional boundaries of genre, but their mixture even forms the basis for many historical and contemporary genres.

Possible topics:

- *rhythmic-metrical or harmonic models of “popular music” in compositions from the 14th to the 18th century
- *dance music as a model
- *“folk music”-derived periodicity in classical phrase syntax
- *salon music, popular arrangements and composition in the 19th century
- *the reception of jazz, pop and rock in “art music” vs. the reception of classical music in jazz, pop and rock
- *electronic composition and electronic dance music (EDM)
- *sampling and quotation techniques in new music and popular music

Section 5: Free Papers

Formats

Individual presentations = 30 Min. paper + 30 Min. discussion **or** 20 Min. paper + 10 Min. discussion.

The preferred format must be specified when the abstract is submitted; an allocation of the desired format cannot be guaranteed.

Panels = 90 min. or 120 min. (conceived as a series of papers of variable length, with or without panel discussion). A panel will only be selected in the case of a positive evaluation of all abstracts chosen for the congress program.

Book presentations = 30 min. incl. discussion (accompanying program)

Workshops (accompanying program) – by arrangement; please send your suggestions directly to the conference chairs

Submissions

Individual presentations

—Abstracts (max. 2,000 characters incl. spaces)

—biographical details of the author (max. 1,000 characters incl. spaces)

Panels

—synoptic outline, including titles of all contributions and a timetable [to be submitted by the chair of the panel] (maximum 2,000 characters including spaces)

—biographical details of the panel chair (max. 1,000 characters incl. spaces)

—abstracts of each individual presentation in the section (max. 2,000 characters incl. spaces for each abstract) [to be submitted separately by the author of the abstract with reference to the panel]

—biographical data of each author (max. of 1,000 characters per author) [to be submitted separately by the author of the abstract with reference to the panel]

If, as the chair of a panel, you would like to invite others to participate in your section, you are welcome to do so via the **newsletters** of the GMTH and the GfPM as soon as possible.

The **conference languages** and languages of the abstracts are German and English.

All applications must be submitted by **15 June 2017** to

<http://www.gmth.de/veranstaltungen/jahreskongress/beitragsanmeldung.aspx>

Further **questions** on submissions can be addressed to **Thomas Wozonig** at:

gfp-gmth-2017@kug.ac.at

Conference website: <http://www.kug.ac.at/gfpm-gmth-2017>

Contributions will be selected by an international jury by means of an anonymized procedure (double-blind peer review). Applicants will be notified no later than **15 July 2017**.