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CONFERENCE REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU DE CONGRÈS: TORONTO 2000

Charity Marsh, Roberta Lamb, Mitchell Morris

Charity Marsh

The primary goal of the Toronto 2000 conference was to congregate the members of fourteen societies allowing for complementary overlap and the intersection of both scholars and musical scholarship from the various disciplines of music academia. Indeed, the "Mega" 2000 conference promised to be a handful of both splendid and questionable performances. As a scholar studying in the field of popular music and ethnomusicology with a background in historical musicology and theory, I was enthusiastic about participating in such a highly orchestrated production as both presenter and spectator. Coming to any conference with such high expectations should often be enough to send warning bells, but I wanted it to be good. I needed it to inspire me in that crazy way that conferences full of exciting and cutting edge research can and often do. Why else would we spend so much time preparing, organizing, and exhausting ourselves for these types of events? Is it not about demonstrating our knowledge concerning a particular topic and exploring interesting questions, thus inspiring others, and being inspired by our colleagues? For me a conference is about momentum, discovering new energies, and ultimately about networking.

Nevertheless, I came to the conference with specific expectations or at least with a desired design of how the conference should play out intellectually and artistically (as well as socially and politically). With representation from so many different music disciplines I was optimistic that there would be *musical intersections*, that move beyond the acknowledgement of surface parallels and common interests. I was also hoping for some alternative or unconventional research, perhaps even conventional research being done using unconventional methods. Although some of these needs, desires and expectations were fulfilled, at the conclusion of the conference I was left feeling somewhat disappointed.

I continue to be discouraged in part by the marginalization of scholars whose research addresses the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, culture and sexuality. The privileging of specific streams of knowledge as well as conventional theories and methodologies perpetuate an exclusive environment that can manifest in/through both subtle and overt means. Yes, we can certainly argue that First Nations music and musical culture has been studied within musicology. However, it is important to question the conditions or terms under which First Nations music is brought into mainstream western academic

scholarship. We must ask ourselves, is First Nations music accepted as a legitimate area of study only when it is made “intelligible” within a dominant methodological framework? And although the centrality of this ethnocentric ideology has been significantly challenged by many, scholarship based on First Nations music and musical culture is often relegated to particular spaces based on the need for unconventional methodologies which are often viewed as less theoretical and thus, less valued. Or in some instances western methodologies and theoretical approaches are unproblematically mapped onto non-Western musical cultures. During the conference the majority of panels addressing issues of First Nations music, identity, and culture were held consecutively on one day. Although the program may have been constructed this way based on logistics it seems to me that setting up this type of space disables the larger theme of looking for intersections and preserves First Nations music scholarship as contained categories. A more subtle type of marginalization manifests itself through what some may interpret as an act of inclusion. For example, as it becomes increasingly *avant garde* to research the intersections of music with gender theory, and theories of race and queer theory, conceptual and structural spaces are broadened to include these peripheral knowledges. This “tolerance of difference” may lead to a surface inclusion but it does little to alter the dichotomy between high and low theory and high and low culture. Thus, the legitimization of these “alternative” theories does not necessarily alter existing power relations as this legitimacy depends on the benevolence of those in privileged positions or more succinctly, those whose research has been considered and accepted as valid.

During this conference I witnessed the playing out of hierarchies based on the systemic privileging of the “serious” over academic work which is still classified as “Other,” and the subordination (and at times the exclusion) of works that address “non-conventional” topics within music scholarship. These hierarchies were perpetuated through various means and on numerous levels from the specific rooms for certain groups to the precisely planned scheduling of overlapping and/or consecutive panels and events to the exclusion of a panel which focused on issues of gay sexuality. Instead of attempting to move toward utopian or idealistic moments of intersection or unity, I felt undercurrents of dissonance between the larger societies, as well as what appeared to be ongoing struggles of power and privilege within individual societies themselves. From this experience two major questions were raised for me: 1) How can an awareness of these issues be raised in a constructive manner? 2) How can the structures be altered in order for music as a discipline to become more inclusive?

This acknowledgement of course does not preclude any or all positive outcomes or meaningful moments from having occurred at the conference, as I am certain that these did exist for many people including myself. I realize it is much easier to problematize the conference in retrospect. Yet I think it is truly an important practice to examine one’s own experience critically at such a “grand” event, recognizing the synonymous and/or complementary elements. Upon further reflection of the “Mega” 2000 conference it has become evident

that although the conference was supposed to partially address *Musical Intersections* between the disciplines of music, it became instead an important site of struggle (and spectacle) for those whose academic work and/or personhood and/or society continue to be identified as Other and thus, continue to be relegated to the periphery, although in increasingly subtle ways.

As I have previously stated, a common problem that persists within the disciplines of music occurs as a result of the values placed on one type of field, theoretical approach, methodology, etc. over another. The ongoing conflict between what one might define as “conventional” and “serious” musical research versus “non-conventional” and “frivolous” musical research are often categorized as those stemming from the dichotomy of high and low theory and culture. And although these binaries may seem tiresome or even passé, this division which predominantly manifests itself through varying methodologies, the legitimization of Othered musics and musical practices, as well as “alternative” theoretical readings and analyses is still very much alive and well. The nature of this system of categorization based on difference is complex and multi-layered. For example, ethnomusicology may be Othered when compared to historical musicology and theory, whereas popular music studies would be Othered when aligned with ethnomusicology. Even within marginalized musics and scholarship hierarchies based on privilege exist. In other words, the research of popular music scholars who study “cock rock” (white, heterosexual male rockers) (Frith and McRobbie 1978) is often privileged (or valued) over the research of scholars who study pop musicians.

During the conference there were various indicators that made it less difficult to determine which type of scholarship was considered “sound” and which was considered less substantial. Some of these indicators can be found in the programming of particular topics, room allocations, overlapping or containing of particular scholarship, etc. It was also particularly interesting to examine which sessions were held in the Sheraton Centre, where the majority of the conference took place, as opposed to those sessions, which occurred in the Toronto Hilton. I am uncertain as to whether or not these decisions were purely based on the smaller room size and projected attendance by the individual societies or if these allocations were made “randomly.” Also crucial to mention when discussing location is how one well-attended panel which addressed issues of queerness, and/or homosexuality was presented at an alternative location altogether on the first evening of the conference in order to avoid complete exclusion. No matter what the rationale for the exclusion of this session from SMT’s regular programming, it does not bode well for a society that is often criticized for its conservative “values” to ignore issues that are relevant and worthy of research in order to maintain status quo.

After attending a few of the sessions a pattern began to emerge for me. Coincidentally, the (recognized) “reputable” scholars were often presenting their work in the more spacious and more comfortable rooms, unless their topics (or societies) were among the lesser valued. Then these panels were often presented in smaller rooms where in some cases the audience was practically hanging from the ceiling. For example, the Adorno session spon-

sored by AMS which included Richard D. Leppert as chair, Lydia Goehr, Susan McClary, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, and Robert Walser as panelists provided a wonderful example of Bakhtin's spectacle with the spectators literally contorting in order to participate or catch a glimpse. The fact that some of these sessions were so well attended leads one to question why particularly well-attended panels were held in smaller rooms. Could these just be small oversights? Was it based on the scholars' reputations? The societies? Or perhaps it was the topics themselves?

Although this is not a new problem, the methods (conscious or unconscious, subtle or overt) by which scholars and their research are marginalized needs to be given much more serious thought and careful consideration, especially in spaces such as this "Mega" conference which is supposed to be a place where different types of leading cutting edge scholarship is displayed. How can we be satisfied as scholars if the value of a discipline is based on a system of categorization that classifies according to constructed or invented difference, and then subsequently determines the value of that music scholarship based on these differences?

Because of the overwhelming size of the conference and the numerous sessions planned I anticipated my own itinerary would be full of interesting papers on topics that would relate to my area of research on some level. What I did not predict was the amount of overlap that occurred between the sessions on particular subject matters. Although I realize it may have been an impossible task to try to organize fourteen programs so that this did not happen, I was surprised at how many of the sessions that addressed issues specifically about race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality overlapped so that it was quite impossible to attend the majority of these panels. Even if one wanted to move freely in and out of sessions to catch presentations on two or three different panels, it was often quite impossible as a result of contrasting starting times, etc. It would be naïve of me to think there would be no overlap, but the excessive overlapping of papers focusing on issues of gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity highlights larger systemic oppressions. The politics of scheduling a conference program and the overlap of topics concerning issues of marginalized groups also has many layers. One might suggest: if there were no overlap, then it could be read as meaning there were very few sessions dealing with these issues. But the fact that there was overlap and/or containment speaks to the volume of these papers. The questions then become: were the numbers of papers dealing with queer theory, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. limited and scheduled simultaneously rather than spread throughout the conference? Or, were there so many that this type of overlap was unavoidable? The problem lies not only within the overall programming of the conference but also within the scheduling of the individual societies and their requests which I suspect had more to do with the overall programming than might appear, creating even more layers and additional complications to the questions I have already posed. And although it may seem questionable to even mention this problem in the context of this review the scheduling of marginalized topics must be done with a great deal of consideration. These types of oversights are problematic because they facilitate exclu-

sionary practices and contain specific research, maintaining the status quo within the grand narrative of the disciplines of music.

Although I am quite aware of the ongoing struggles of privilege and marginalization of groups and/or research based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. within different disciplines, I believe that when the opportunity to address these ongoing problems arises it should be taken seriously. To avoid and indeed perpetuate this type of marginalization and exclusion especially at a conference that could have potentially been a powerful tool for change demonstrates the “outdated” politic of music scholarship. From the conference title *Musical Intersections*, one should be able to expect more than just various musical societies congregating together. Rather this should be a space where different musical disciplines really do intersect and allow these moments a place to flourish, not to overlap or be swept to the side. Because it is through the creation of these moments of acknowledgement and solidarity that a conference may become more than a spectacle, shifting from a site of struggle to a place of change. A “Mega” conference such as this one (at the turn of the century) should be a more inclusive space which speaks not only to where music scholarship has been but also to where music scholarship is heading and to the “progressive” means we will take to arrive there, as well as a commitment to working through the power relations at work in constructing our understanding of difference.

Roberta Lamb

The mega-meeting in Toronto overwhelmed me—village girl awed by the metropolis. This metaphor extended to the ironic situation of being surrounded by Americans who seemed unaware they were no longer in the U.S.A., and the domination of the American societies over the Canadian ones within the conference schedule and structure. There were too many people and too many organizations and too many sessions all at the same time. Sessions began at 8 a.m. and continued through 11 p.m. Each night I planned the sessions I would attend the following day, and each day my schedule would change, often based upon people I ran into while looking for a session—because I then wanted to spend more time with them catching up since the last conference. I was frustrated by each organization having a different time-slot system so that it was difficult to plan session-hopping in order to try to get to all those on my list. Still, there were many good things about this mega-meet. For me, the two most important were the opportunity to attend sessions in all music specialisations and the visibility of educational concerns in nearly all societies. Canadian scholars were well-represented throughout the conference in many organizations. In addition to CUMS and the other Canadian organisations (CAML and CSTM), Canadians made substantial contributions, particularly in SEM and SMPC. My discussion here is limited to music education, in order to ensure that these sessions are recognised; however, I value the many musicology and ethnomusicology sessions I attended.

Interest in education is increasing in “content” areas of performance, theory, composition, musicology and ethnomusicology. I was impressed with the

number of pedagogical or educationally-focused sessions throughout the conference. Every society, with the exception of CUMS, listed such sessions in the conference agenda. It was ironic that the CUMS page in the agenda listed stimulating research in pedagogy as part of its mandate and proclaimed, "We're a kind of Canadian version of CMS and NASM rolled into one—with a heavy dash of AMS, SMT, SEM, IASPM and a few others—" (p. A56). Yet, there was no Canadian version of the CMS panels devoted to educational issues (10), workshops (2), or paper sessions (6). These 18 full sessions, plus additional joint-sessions with other organisations, addressed such varied topics as the undergraduate curriculum, music cognition and analysis, communication across music disciplines, professional development, music teacher education, teaching non-majors, and the role of the canon. Even AMS, considered a rather conservative organisation, provided 4 sessions addressing education through professional development: "Being a Successful Musicologist While Working in Other Professions"; "The Musicologist as Undergraduate Teacher"; "Sharing the Field"; and "Librarians as Teachers." AMS also supported joint sessions with other societies on "Early Music in the Curriculum" (AMIS-AMS-CMS-HBS) and "The Status, Roles and Identities of Women in the Music Profession" (AMS-CMS-IAWM-SAM-SEM-SMT). I wondered why CUMS did not join in this joint sponsorship. Was it lack of interest on the part of CUMS? Was it American imperialism? Was it a means of maintaining a Canadian identity, one which simultaneously limits and throws education outside that identity? If CUMS wants to represent itself as the Canadian CMS, then some efforts towards more innovative, inclusive programming and outreach to educational communities need to be made. (This is not a new issue. The rather sorry answer "we can only accept good submissions and none were received" does not cut it. When scholars concerned with educational theory, pedagogy and professional development learn that education is not taken seriously, they speak with their feet and take their good proposals and memberships elsewhere.) An honest re-appraisal of the CUMS mandate might be in order.

The Toronto mega-conference provided a great opportunity to sample different organizations' sessions and get a better sense of the different music organizations and societies. For example, I have never attended or been a member of ATMI (Association for Technology in Music Instruction). I was favourably impressed by several ATMI sessions in Toronto. Here is a music education organization that crosses disciplinary boundaries through seeking solutions to the common problem of how to use technology to best advantage in music instruction. Music education, music performance, music theory, music composition and music history, as well as educational psychology and technology were all represented, and these sessions dealt with all levels of education from pre-school through graduate school. Kimberly C. Walls (Auburn University) presented an interesting electronic poster session on "School Musicians' Attitudes toward Hypermedia-Enhanced Rehearsals." One of the most fascinating pedagogical uses of technology demonstrated was a *West Side Story* CD-ROM (Kate Covington and Charles Lord, University of Kentucky)

that provided many opportunities for analysing the musical through dance, drama, music, and sociology. Distance learning was another topic where ATMI presenters demonstrated unique possibilities of new technologies.

ATMI did not corner the technology issue. IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music) sponsored "When Technology and Music Intersect" that included four papers addressing pedagogy and technology. Of these, "The Music Teacher, the DJ, and the Turntable" (Kai Fikentscher—Columbia University) involved a fascinating analysis of informal music education through popular music, and in "Technology and Epistemology" (Steve Jones—University of Illinois at Chicago), the presenter asked important questions about teaching popular music. Scheduled simultaneously with this session was another IASPM offering called "Pedagogies and Methodologies" which featured an excellent analysis of gender and race in the university classroom. In "The 2:00 Vibe: Mixing Cultures, Amplifying Gender, and Producing an Alternative Pedagogy for Popular Music," Kyra D. Gaunt (University of Virginia) delivered a most salient explication of race, class and gender in university classroom struggles. Throughout the conference, I noticed that in most cases gender and education, or race and education, were separate from those sessions that explicitly examined gender, race, and sexuality. Gaunt's paper was an exception to this pattern.

Ethnomusicology and music education have much in common: both disciplines are concerned with transmission and contexts. It is encouraging to see the communication between music educators and ethnomusicologists develop. Some of the most interesting pedagogical sessions, to me, were those sponsored by the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the Canadian Society for Traditional Music (CSTM). Sherry Johnson gave an excellent presentation about the youth step-dancing group Canadian Heritage that highlighted the complexities of authenticity in "Examining 'Heritage' in Canadian Heritage." Judith Cohen (York University), Sonia James-Wilson (University of Toronto), and Kari Veblen shared curriculum and the frustrations of teaching in Ontario in "Oral Tradition and the Medieval Music Curriculum in Ontario: Ideas, Experiences and Possibilities." Both of these sessions were sponsored by the CSTM.

The SEM Education Committee (Bryan Burton, chair; Kari Veblen, past-chair) sponsored the session "Keeping it Real: Ethnomusicology In, As, and for Multicultural Music Education," its committee meeting, and a forum called "Musics of the World: Outreach." This last session was remarkable for its attempt to bring together school music educators, children, university music educators, and "bona fide" ethnomusicologists. Teachers who have done extensive work in a particular culture, whether their own or one intensively studied, presented a bit of the fieldwork and then demonstrated classroom applications. The SEM Education Committee sessions provided a means of interrogating differences as part of pedagogy and ethnomusicology. There were three other SEM sessions important to music educators. Kari Veblen organised "Music for Children," a session that included Kenyan call and response, koto instructional music, and ice cream truck music. Timothy Rice's

three-dimensional model of postmodern musical experience was the foundation for papers by Rice (UCLA), Salwa El-Shawan Costelo-Branco (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Andrew Killick (Florida State University), Ellen Koskoff (Eastman) and David Elliott (University of Toronto). This session provoked extensive discussion. "Musicking in the Culture and Experience of Children" featured papers by Ramona Holmes (Seattle Pacific University), Patricia Shehan Campbell (University of Washington), Charles Keil (SUNY Buffalo), and Marie McCarthy (University of Maryland, College Park). Marie McCarthy's meticulous research in "Documenting Children's Musical Culture" provided us with a history of research on children's musics, pointing out the role of women in this project.

The Toronto mega-meeting was a spectacle of an experience. It would be great to have another opportunity for music scholars from all of music's disciplines to meet together and benefit from discussion across those barriers, but perhaps we need to practice this discussion on a local level before attempting it again on a North American (not-quite-global?) level. Perhaps this could be a challenge where CUMS could exercise leadership.

Mitchell Morris

Let me state my conclusions at the outset—although the presence of so many music scholars from varying disciplinary backgrounds and geographical origins was indeed inspiring, Toronto 2000 was a mixed bag. It could have been nothing else, given the institutional structures with which we work in the various fields of musical scholarship. Anyone who has sat on program committees knows how difficult abstracts can be to judge, how slippery seemingly "objective" standards are just at the moment when they seem to be most necessary, and how little the abstracts may actually have to do, when all is said and done, with the final presentation. Anyone who has ever tried to manage the physical arrangements for even a small conference knows how difficult it can be to allot spaces to make the best match with given panels and their expected audiences. Anyone who has ever supervised sound and visual equipment knows how finicky it is, how vulnerable to utterly mysterious malfunctions. All of these problems materialized in abundance, and most of them may be excused with the note that most scholarly societies planning conferences of this size have recourse to professional conference planners and their staffs (the mammoth annual conferences of the Modern Language Association come to mind); given music scholars' "do it yourself" tradition, many of the problems were unavoidable and may be pardoned. Indeed, all the participants and organizers must be commended for taking on such an enormous task. But even so, there were at least two areas in which the conference experienced defects that might well have been avoided.

My minor objections have to do with room assignments. Even given the great difficulty of determining how much interest a given topic is likely to raise in conference delegates, it seems unreasonable to have assigned the study session on Adorno, featuring such notable (and controversial) figures as Lydia Goehr, Richard Leppert, Susan McClary, Rose Subotnik, and Robert Walser,

to a tiny room. Even fifteen minutes before the panel began, it was impossible even to gain entrance to the room, and a large number of people who wished to attend were simply turned away. (I know. I was one of them.) This was not the only case of badly misjudged room sizes—at least one other session saw over twenty people leave because they couldn't even move close enough to the doors to hear anything at all, while during the same time slot a session held in a ballroom drew an audience of approximately twenty people. To be sure, this is an old problem with scholarly meetings, but the weight given Toronto 2000 as if it were a multi-disciplinary “snapshot” made its miscalculations in room assignments especially sharp. Perhaps it would be expedient to make sure that those in charge of scheduling rooms at the local level receive more help from their professional societies, with at least some indication of sessions the program committees think likely to be big box-office.

A much more serious problem, however, concerned the poor sound equipment, and the sloppiness with which it was secured and managed. I myself gave a paper with equipment that was so poor that I was forced to take the speaker's microphone, stand up and move to the front of the table, and hold it against the CD player so that the audience in our very small room could hear my musical examples. Even then, the music was close to inaudible. Our session's VCR was also extremely cranky. But at least we *had* equipment. One absolute horror story involves an AMS session that started late because a slide projector repeatedly requested was not delivered at the beginning of the session. Meanwhile, even during the beginning of the first presentation, elevator music filled the back of the ballroom, and the student proctors who were given charge of the space had no way to stop it. But the second paper required a VCR—which was not delivered until the very *end* of the session. The paper was so effectively argued that it could be understood, but at the very least the presenter and all the participants in the session are owed an apology for such an unconscionable failure to deliver on time what had been repeatedly requested. Such things smack of the second-rate, and that is a most unfortunate impression to have been left with.

Despite these severe drawbacks, there were many interesting talks and productive interactions to be found at Toronto 2000, and as is always the case, many good things were not even listed on the program. A good example is one of the most successful panels I attended, at best only quasi-official: the Gay and Lesbian Study Group of the AMS sponsored an early session at the University of Toronto on Wednesday night, which was exceptional in the quality of its presentations and the productivity of discussion.¹ The papers for the Toronto panel had been rejected from inclusion in the program of the SMT, hence the decision of the GLSG to sponsor them in the form of a small “pre-conference” evenly divided, it might be said, between francophiles and avant-gardists. All four papers (however one might care to argue over finer points of interpretation), as well as the enthusiastic discussions that followed

¹ The first such extra-conference event I am aware of was another GLSG event entitled “ForePlay,” hosted at the University of Minnesota just before the 1994 AMS meeting.

them, demonstrated a vigor and imagination that continue to operate in musical studies of gender and sexuality.

But in fact the majority of the talks and panels I attended were quite worthwhile. In a study session entitled "Notation, Transmission, Attribution, Authenticity," the participants brought together a consideration of musical texts ranging from early chant, the *Ars subtilior*, sixteenth-century motets, madrigals, and monodies to jazz, comparing their written materials to informed speculation about performance, and in most cases made some startlingly radical suggestions about how to re-think earlier repertoires without falling back into our traditional assumptions about what a musical work may be said to be. Tamara Levitz gave a talk on a Dalcroze staging of Gluck's *Orpheus und Eurydice* that suggests new and rich avenues of inquiry into the meaning of Neoclassicism in the early twentieth century. Ramsey El-Assal, in examining the ways Arabic musical theory was received in the West, synthesized an enormous amount of material relevant to medieval Arabic studies, ethnomusicology, and nineteenth-century music history. Lora Matthews and Paul Merkeley continued their amazing archivally-based revisions of the biography of Josquin (Lebloitte dit) Desprez by locating him in the service of René of Anjou during the 1470s.

My biggest regret for the conference is naturally that it was so rich that I inevitably left feeling that I had missed out on many intriguing projects. Even a casual glance through the massive program booklet showed how rich and varied is the terrain of musical scholarship. I saw any number of places where even more cross-society involvement would have been effective and potentially relevatory. Unfortunately, given the structure of our institutions, most of us are always more obliged to attend some of our societies more than others. There may never be another conference in music that aspires to the comprehensiveness of Toronto 2000—but its successes and failures can surely serve to guide us in attempts to seek greater enrichment from our colleagues in neighbour areas of work.