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NEW TRENDS IN MODERN MUSICOLOGY. A DISCUSSION WITH PROFESSOR NICHOLAS COOK

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SUMMARY. Is musicology nowadays a genuine *Terra Nova* or just a collection of scientific relics? Might it be considered adequately equipped to extend its interdisciplinary boundaries and embrace the reality of new music, or does it still cling to the past? Should researchers follow the Schenkerian route or conquer new territories? Are we still mistaking the score with the music itself? Do we still ignore performance as an object of study? Can we shake the habit of focusing mainly on Western musical traditions? Could all these things coexist and if so, are we able to adapt our musicological tools to their requirements? To all these and various other questions Professor Nicholas Cook from the University of Cambridge will provide some clues and invite us to reflect further, tracing and examining the new trends in modern musicology.

Keywords: Musicology, performance, research, collaborative projects, multidisciplinarity, Ludomusicology, University of Cambridge

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B.T. – *Dear and esteemed Professor Nicholas Cook, it is such a privilege to have the opportunity of a colloquial dialogue, which is intended to highlight some of the open doors in modern musicology - doors which some either refuse to notice or don't dare to use. Your rich experience as a researcher*[2] *and teacher*[3] *has helped you to put a lot of topics in perspective but also to keep your finger on the pulse of contemporary musicology and of present-day musical life in general. Allow me to start our debate by formulating one of my queries: why does a musicologist always eager to take on fresh challenges and constantly placed at the forefront of the latest research topics states 'We are all (ethno)musicologists now'*[4]*?*

N.C. – Because we are! In a world of multiple and intersecting identities, the colonialist distinction of 'us' and 'them' no longer makes sense. That's one reason. Another is that musicology's self-definition in opposition to ethnomusicology has traditionally been built on the assumption that music is in essence a form of writing—an assumption that goes back to the nineteenth century, when musicology came into being as an attempt to do for music what philology did for literature. Performance and other dimensions of music as social action were excluded from this text-oriented approach, and so they ended up in comparative musicology and then its successor, ethnomusicology. That's no longer a viable distinction either.

B.T. – *If I am correct, what you are pleading for in your definition of the modern researcher is in fact a fusion between the musicologist and the ethnomusicologist, as previously defined by you. This is why I bring into our discussion one word organically related to ethnomusicology, a word which has to be redefined: the term 'fieldwork' makes us here in Romania (and probably in many other places around the world) think automatically of Bartók or*

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[2] From the extensive list of books by Nicholas Cook we select a few: *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, Dent, London, 1987; *Musical Analysis and the Listener*, Garland, New York, 1989; *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990; *Analysis through Composition: Principles of the Classical Style*, Oxford University Press, 1996, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, Cambridge University Press, 1998; *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998; *Music, Performance, Meaning: Selected Essays*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007; *The Schenker Project: Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007; *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999; *Empirical Musicology. Aims, Methods, Prospects,* ed. Eric Clark and Nicholas Cook, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004, etc.

[3] Professor Nicholas Cook taught at the University of Hong Kong, University of Sydney, University of Southampton, Royal Holloway University of London, University of Cambridge. Since 2001 he has been a Fellow of the British Academy.

[4] Nicholas Cook, 'We are all (ethno)musicologists now', in: *The New (Ethno) musicologies*, Henry Stobart (ed.), 2008, pp. 48-70.

Brăiloiu, which creates an association with the past, and with an ancestral layer of folk music. Of course, today the whole context changed and so did the meaning of the word. What should a modern (ethno) musicologist understand when talking about the 'fieldwork' nowadays?

N.C. – Any form of ethnographic study. When I was a graduate student, only ethnomusicologists did ethnography. Nowadays half of my graduate students are doing ethnography, even though they wouldn't describe themselves as ethnomusicologists. They are working on improvisation, performance, cover bands, record production—all intrinsic parts of musicology today. In essence they are doing just the same kind of work as other students who are working on Gypsy music in London, or on political dimensions of traditional musical practices in Uzbekistan—and who *do* describe themselves as ethnomusicologists. I don't see the difference. So I think the 'field' in 'fieldwork' should be understood in terms of disciplinary area, not rural landscape!

B.T. – *It is indeed an important remark which adds a different layer of meaning to the term and helps me go on to the next question, keeping us anchored to the present. I am aware that you are engaged in an important large-scale collaborative project, which would set a good example of what modern fieldwork means. It's called 'CMPCP' (short for AHRC Research Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice), it runs under the direction of Professor John Rink and hosts an international Performance Studies Network. It brings together scholars and students from several outstanding academic centres, such as the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, Royal Holloway, King's College London, the Royal College of Music, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Could you describe the project and point out the aims of this novel research, apart from bridging disciplines, as the boundaries between musicology and other humanities become increasingly blurred?*

N.C. – CMPCP is the second phase of a project the first phase of which was CHARM, the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, which I directed from 2004-09 at Royal Holloway, University of London. In each case the basic aim was the same: to place performance at the heart of musicology, alongside (I didn't say instead of) scores. Music is a performing art, but you wouldn't guess it from a lot of musicology! The basic insight of this work is shared with theatre studies and with interdisciplinary performance studies as shaped by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner: rather than being inherent in texts, meaning is generated in the real time of performance. Once you start thinking about music that way, the whole discipline starts taking on a different shape. That takes a lot of rethinking, and that's why we thought it

appropriate to set up a large-scale, multi-partner initiative. In the case of CHARM we focussed our work round recordings, partly to make the project more manageable, and partly because there was so much spadework still to be done in the study of recordings—the sort of thing that was done decades ago in the study of scores. (I'm talking for example about discographies—just finding out what records were made when can be a huge task—and about discographic source criticism and methods of analysis.) But of course the world of recorded music is just a subset of the world of music as performance, and so when the chance came to bid for a further five years of funding, we focussed it round ethnographic studies of live performance in a number of different situations—teaching, rehearsal, the bringing to performance of new works, and a comparative study of different world ensembles.

B.T. – *I am not mistaken if I say that it very much looks like an experiment in a modern musicology laboratory, one which also includes music players in the research process and tries to make a clear distinction between 'score' and 'music'. Are the performers satisfied to take part in such an event, accepting the idea of being taken and studied as a framework of artistic interaction? Besides, in this particular case, we are talking about three notable resident ensembles at the University of Cambridge, namely the Academy of Ancient Music, Britten Sinfonia, and the Endellion String Quartet.*

N.C. – Unlike CHARM, CMPCP was specifically designed to interact closely with professional (and non-professional) performers, not just as informants but as co-researchers: that's where the Performance Studies Network comes in. It is possible to get the relationship between performers and academics wrong, so that the performers feel that university researchers are so to speak jetting in and treating them like third-world natives; the problem is intensified by the institutional rivalries that exist between the university and conservatory sectors. Obviously we are careful to avoid anything like this.

B.T. – *So it is not only an exercise in artistic diplomacy, but also a productive activity which emerges as a natural consequence. I think this is a brilliant way of avoiding the tension going on inside those institutions which host both Theory and Performance Departments under the same roof.*

N.C. – That is why it's so important that conservatories form part of the partnership, and that we see our conservatory colleagues as research collaborators and not just informants. It helps a great deal that there is a long tradition of performance in British universities, and of academic research at British conservatories. For example John Rink, who as you said directs CMPCP, is a trained concert pianist. As for our resident ensembles, they naturally

interact a lot with our student composers and performers, but I'm pleased to say that they are becoming increasingly involved in various kinds of research projects: for example a recent doctoral student studied patterns of interaction between the players of the Britten Sinfonia when they perform without a conductor—who takes the lead and at what points, and how, and why.

B.T. – *There is another project which relies upon the direct involvement of performers, stimulating again the interaction of theory and practice rather than their traditional separation. It is a project which involves a famous String Quartet – the Arditti and it's called 'Strings on Screen'. Around which idea does it revolve and which institutions are carrying out this task?*

N.C. – The project you are referring to was collaboration between the Arditti Quartet, who specialise in contemporary music, and Paul Archbold, who was at Kingston University but recent became director of the Institute of Musical Research in London. They have recently completed a film, called 'Climbing a mountain', which follows through the protracted process of bringing to performance a new work by the 'New Complexity' composer Brian Ferneyhough. This is forbiddingly difficult music—or at least that's how it looks in the score—and the film charts how, in collaboration with the composer, the quartet forged their interpretation. Behind the project is the question of the relative creative contributions of performers and composer to the finished result, and the film is intended as much for specialist string players as for musicologists. The Arditti is just one of a number of ensembles engaging in work of this kind. Another is the Kreutzer Quartet, who for example have recently collaborated with Amanda Bayley (of the University of Wolverhampton) to document the bringing to performance of a new quartet by Michael Finnissy. I don't know what it is about string quartets, or for that matter composers whose names begin with 'F', that seems to make them particularly sympathetic to projects of this sort!

B.T. – *To go along with your 'F' game, I should add that one of the composers you mentioned spent many years teaching in **F**reiburg, Germany (Brian Ferneyhough, between 1973-1986). I detect in both projects the potential of stimulating modern composition, as a side effect of the research process or as a hidden purpose of it, but maybe I am wrong. Was this also one of the aims of the projects you are involved in?*

N.C. – I don't think it was a conscious aim, though it may have been an unconscious one, and after all ensembles like the Arditti and Kreutzer Quartets are excellent advocates for new music. But one of the problems with modern composition, as you call it, is perhaps its forbidding appearance on the

page, and you might argue that academics and critics place too much attention on the page, and too little on real people making music together. I sometimes think that music analysis has worked to make modern music more unapproachable than it needed to be, and weaning analysis from the page by redirecting it to the stage is the remedy for that.

B.T. – *This would allow us to readjust the more scientific approach to music, and, ultimately to do greater justice to performance. Both projects you presented are converging towards the idea that musicology should not be structured only around composition. Besides, they bring into question the idea of 'distributed creativity' between composer and performer. Which are the methodologies that best fit such a large-scale scientific approach?*

N.C. – Yes, 'distributed creativity' is the idea behind the Ferneyhough and Finnissy projects—creativity isn't just something inscribed into the score, it inheres in the processes of making music together, and Archbold and Bayley document how this applies to the interactions of composers and performers. Most work of this sort is done through ethnographical study, involving observation and participant observation as well as interviews and questionnaires, but there is also a place for experimental work under controlled conditions. In the UK there has been a great deal of collaboration between musicologists and psychologists since the 1980s, so a wide range of empirical approaches are adopted for the study of music in general and of performance in particular, ranging from experimental research to computational analysis of recordings, for example.

B.T. – *I am sorry to divert our conversation from its scientific altitude to 'earthly matters', but I cannot help asking myself one particular question: are projects like this getting a proper budget? Or, let me put it in another way: is it difficult to attract funds for research in our discipline?*

N.C. – The good news: I think we will look back on the UK during the first decade of the twenty-first century as a golden age of arts and humanities funding, especially in terms of performance studies. Until 1998 project funding in the humanities was mainly available through the Humanities Research Board (HRB), but in that year it was replaced by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), which in turn gave way seven years later to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). In institutional though not financial terms that put arts and humanities research funding onto the same basis as scientific research funding, and with each change the funding level increased. Since the difference between the HRB and the AHRB was the A, that is to say arts, the AHRB/C took this new remit very seriously. Also one of their strategies

was to encourage the development of collaborative research, and performance research, especially what became known as 'practice-based research' or 'practice as research', was inherently collaborative: it brought together academic researchers and performers. In other words it ticked all the boxes and that has to be one of the things that lay behind the funding of CHARM and CMPCP. The bad news is that we may look back on this as a golden age because the funding environment is becoming less favourable. That had already started because of increased governmental micromanagement: increasingly the sort of things the funding councils wanted to fund didn't look like what researchers regarded as research. The *coup de grace* was the collapse of the European economy. The funding situation for arts and humanities in the UK isn't bad compared to most other places, but I don't think it's what it was.

B.T. – *After the experience of taking part in such grandiose scientific projects, would you agree that research in musicology today is more effective if approached as team work (like a network of academic forces) or as an individual effort?*

N.C. – There's no need to say more or less. There's room for both, because individual and collaborative research are good for different kinds of work. I regard myself as essentially a lone researcher; at least what I like doing best is writing books, and I would feel as awkward about sharing that kind of imaginative effort with someone else as I think most novelists or symphonists would, and for much the same reason. But my own project within CHARM, which involved developing computational techniques for working with large numbers of recordings in order to focus on issues of performance style, was intrinsically collaborative: I was working with a MIR (music information retrieval) expert, and couldn’t possibly have undertaken the project on my own. Beyond that, I would say that CHARM gave all of the musicologists involved in it an insight into collaborative research, not just in terms of working across disciplines, but of being part of a research community in which everyone from the doctoral students to the professors presented and discussed their work in progress with everyone else. That's a very supportive kind of research environment, and it's common in the sciences, but much less so in the humanities, including musicology. I think musicologists can only gain from realising the advantages offered by more collaborative models of research than they are used to, but there's no question of the one replacing the other.

B.T. – *'Coexistence' would then be the right word. In my opinion, the most important condition for a musicologist now is to be open-minded. I remember your saying that musicology nowadays is still excessively score-oriented,*

male-oriented and Western-art tradition oriented. In one word, it is a discipline extremely limited both geographically and as a phenomenon. A significant part of the musicology research today errs in the narrowness of its focus. Therefore, is it hard to impose a totally new line of research which others can acknowledge as completely valid? You know what I mean: either Matthäus Passion or Sting.

N.C. – Open-minded, yes, but really I think it's a matter of recognising the world as it actually exists. Imagine a future interplanetary historian from Mars chancing on a complete run of the *Journal of Music Theory* that somehow survived the destruction of the earth, and trying to reconstruct from it what our world was like! He/she/it would never be able to do it. I'm in favour of musicology that has something to do with music as it exists in the world we live in. So it's not a question of liking the *St Matthew Passion* more than Sting or the other way round, it's a question of recognising that they are both part of the world of music today. And whereas I don't see anything wrong with a researcher who chooses to work on the *St Matthew Passion* and not Sting, or for that matter the other way round, when it comes to teaching it just has to be both-and, not either-or. The world of twenty-first-century music is the world of the *St Matthew Passion* **and** Sting, and any degree programme that doesn't prepare its students for that world is doing them a disservice.

B.T. – *In fact, we need to change our musical pedagogy. I consider your research very much along these lines, knowing that you embrace equally topics related to traditional values of music (let's call them as such in order to make a clear distinction for the readers) and also nonconformist themes. For example, your extended list of publications includes on the one hand a book dedicated to Beethoven's Symphony No.9*[5]*, and on the other a recent article that focuses on Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'— specifically on the countless amateur remakes of it on YouTube, and the participatory community that has grown up around them*[6]*. Moreover, you bring together in one book very contrasting musical universes; let's just consider 'From Madonna to Gregorian Chant', to quote the title of the Spanish translation of your book 'Music: A Very Short Introduction'*[7]*. From this perspective I would very much like us to examine together the case of the Music Faculty of the University of Cambridge. It is one of the best examples of balancing canonical disciplines with modern*

[5] Cook, Nicholas, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[6] Cook, Nicholas, *'Video Cultures: "Bohemian Rhapsody", "Wayne's World" and Beyond'*, in: *Representation in Western Music*, edited by Joshua Walden, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (forthcoming).
[7] Cook, Nicholas, *Music. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

approaches and topics. From Music Analysis to Notation, Aesthetics or Schenkerian Analysis (for which all respectable Universities have at least one notable specialist on board), since you came to teach at Cambridge, you managed to renew the undergraduate and the graduate curriculum. I am thinking about courses meant to attract the student to the class only by saying their names: 'Towards a Relational musicology', 'Studying Music as Performance', 'Understanding recordings as historical documents' and so on. Maybe you could briefly describe these disciplines for our readers and tell us more about how they are welcomed by the students.

N.C. – Well, you're mentioning just courses I taught, but the modernisation of the curriculum you refer to goes beyond my teaching, of course—and indeed the Cambridge curriculum was one of the first in the UK to include ethnomusicology and scientific approaches to music, while other colleagues are teaching in such areas of jazz and popular music. And actually, there are some very up-to-date aspects of our more historical teaching and research, ranging from understanding the sources of the earliest medieval notations in improvisation and performance to the development of Western-style opera in South America or India. But coming back to the courses you mentioned, 'Studying Music as Performance' brings together the work I did at CHARM and other work I've carried out in this area, with the underlying topic being the need to reconceptualise music in terms of the performative generation of meaning—so I've talked about that already, and the course was really a first draft of the book I am now completing. 'Understanding recordings as historical documents' was also part of that project: you need source skills to know what conclusions you can draw from recordings, just as you do to work with medieval manuscripts or composers' sketches, so we include discographic source criticism in our graduate curriculum. As for the idea of 'relational musicology', by that I mean an approach to music that centres on its capacity to construct social relationships at both individual and group level, complementing what I see as the over-emphasis of the so called 'New' musicology of the 1990s on music's role in constructions of subjectivity. This approach arises out of my work in performance, understanding it as an arena within which social relationships are not only symbolised but also enacted, but I'm trying to develop this way of understanding music in contexts of intercultural negotiation—this has long been an interest of mine, perhaps reflecting the facts that I spent my early childhood in Greece and that I taught for eight years at Hong Kong University (that was my first job).

B.T. – *This might be the key to your broad outlook and also to your propensity for multiculturalism. But going back to the curriculum issue, I would also like to point out that for the graduation exams; you encourage the students at the*

Faculty of Music in Cambridge to reach for unusual subjects. What would be some of the most courageous approaches you've come across lately in your teaching activity?

N.C. – Well, in the last year or two I've had students working on early twentieth-century pianistic style, the influence on performance of rhetorical traditions, on social interactions within free improvisation, on the production of both classical and pop records, on cover versions, on how Coldplay brand their music, on the idea of India in British rock, on the role of popular music in renegotiating Israeli identity, on contemporary Korean popular music (so called K-pop), on film and videogame music —

B.T. *– Which coins a new term nowadays: 'Ludomusicology'.*

N.C. – Yes, and on the role of the web in disseminating contemporary pop, on music and copyright, on ideas of memorialisation in twentieth-century music, on the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, on classical music in China—will that do? Actually, working on Beethoven could be quite courageous too.

B.T. *– Indeed, and also very useful, if treated in an original manner or if highlighting unknown aspects of his music. But you just displayed such a wide array of topics with which the present challenges us! Therefore, I would like to ask what do you think about the approaches clinging to sheer analysis and never departing from it, no matter whether we are referring to score or performance analysis? I dare to quote a short fragment from Tim Howell's book, and then I'll kindly invite you to develop the idea: 'The role of analysis in this context is one of raising possibilities rather than providing solutions'*[8]*. You added yourself a few valid comments on this idea, stating that 'analysis contributes /…/ as process, not as product'*[9] *and 'what matters in analysis is not so much what it represents but what it does, or more precisely what leads* ***you*** *to do'*[10]*. Basically one should not regard analysis as the aim of a scientific approach, but rather as its starting point, is this the message conveyed?*

N.C. – I have always thought of analysis as a box of tools with which you can do things. (That was the message of my first book, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*.) The passages you cite from Tim Howell are about analysis for

[8] Howell, Tim, *'Analysis and Performance: The Search for a Middleground',* in: *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, edited by John Paynter, Tim Howell, Richard Orton and Peter Seymour, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 709.
[9] Cook, Nicholas, *'Analysing Performance, Performing Analysis'*, in: *Rethinking Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook & Mark Everist, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 249.
[10] Ibidem.

performers: he's basically saying that in the act of doing analysis you gain a sense of different performance options, different ways you can play something, decisions you are free to take—that's what he means about analysis asking questions rather than providing answers. That's fine. So is using analysis to understand how music and images and text work together to create meaning in film, or how different kinds of music can create new hybrid forms in intercultural situations. But I don't see the point of analytical tools unless you use them to do *something*. Otherwise it's like spending all your time polishing your saw but never using it to cut up pieces of wood. And that seems to me as boring as it is pointless.

B.T. – *I am happy to acknowledge the fact that our opinions do clash, except that you provided such a suggestive picture for it. It would be the ideal 'motto' of an analysis course for students, saw picture included on the cover!*

N.C. – Actually I always wanted my *Guide to Musical Analysis* to have a cover picture of a couple of hikers looking at a signpost with Schenkerian analysis pointing in one direction, Semiotic analysis in another, and so forth. But the publishers didn't buy it.

B.T. – *Too bad. But let's push the idea a bit further; from Heinrich Schenker to Rudolph Reti, Leonard B. Meyer, or Fred Lerdahl, to name but a few, analysis seems to be synonymous with musical dissection. Representing undoubtedly a very useful tool in musical understanding, it often lacks a certain degree of creativity. Lydia Goehr is also an author very articulate in her writings regarding the limitations of the analytic approach*[11]*. But in your case, after publishing a few remarkable books on this topic*[12]*, do you consider that analysis should be viewed above all as a creative process? In order to get a smile from our readers, I return to Tim Howell's words: 'He who can, perform, he who cannot, analyse*[13]*.*

N.C. – Yes, and I suppose he who cannot analyse teaches analysis! (Which is what Tim Howell does, as a matter of fact….). Actually I think the idea of analysis as a toolbox suggests the answer. Does sawing up pieces of wood, or making holes in them, lack a certain degree of creativity? That's not a sensible question: it depends what you are sawing and making holes for, what you are

[11] Goehr, Lydia, *The imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 69-88.
[12] Cook, Nicholas, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, Dent, London, 1987; *Musical Analysis and the Listener*, Garland, New York, 1989; *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998.
[13] Howell, Tim, Idem, p. 693.

making. It might be creative or it might not. Tools can be used creatively or uncreatively. Anybody who reads Schenker's original writings can be in no doubt of the creative power of his imagination; in that sense it's like reading Wagner or Adorno. That doesn't mean that his theories cannot be applied in a dreary kind of way that closes down rather than opens up avenues of thought. (Actually I think that's what Schenker himself started doing in his last years, as his attitudes to everything became increasingly dogmatic.) Whether it's a saw or a music theory, creativity lies in what it is used to do and how it is used to do it.

B.T. – *Method, creativity and purpose would then be the answer! Sticking to the same perimeter, I recall the beginning of your book 'The Schenker Project', which abruptly states in the first sentence: 'If Schenker's theory was the solution, what was the problem?'*[14] *After confronting Schenker with all kinds of contexts, did you figure out what the problem was?*

N.C. – Yes, the problem was the decline of Western civilisation. At one level, Schenker's project was to reform the composition, performance, criticism, and teaching of music, which he saw as having been corrupted by phony intellectualism and the cult of superficiality. But he saw those as reflecting much more deeply seated social, political, and ethical problems. That's why his writings are as much about society, politics, and ethics as they are about music, and people have misunderstood his writings—and failed to grasp the perhaps slightly crazy grandeur of his thought—by treating them as if they were just about music. Schenkerian theory was reinvented in post-war America, mainly by his former pupils who had fled there to escape the holocaust. It became something completely different from what it had been in Schenker's lifetime. To understand what Schenker's theory meant to him and his contemporaries, to understand its original motivations—to understand what it was *about*—you have to understand *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, the racially fissured hothouse that gave rise to both architectural modernism and radical anti-Semitism. Both are part of the story. It's an extraordinary adventure in intellectual history, a true story that's stranger than fiction, and you'd never be able guess it from the appearance of modern Schenkerian discourse. To borrow one of Schenker's own metaphors, it shows how much history lies beneath the ground we walk on. So that's why I wrote the book.

[14] Cook, Nicholas, *The Schenker Project. Culture, Race, And Music Theory in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, p. 3.

B.T. – *… digging out the treasure hidden under the paving stones, I would add. But studying the history of our discipline (from Historical to Systematic and Cognitive Musicology) how would you weigh the shallow psychological approaches relating personal events in the life of a composer to what he writes for the clarinet in bar 5, for example? Does this really matter in terms of general music understanding? To me it looks like pure speculation leading nowhere and hiding a deep lack of substance and vision. It's like using a marvelous tool in a pathetic way. I think psychology would be extremely important as an interface for performance, do you agree?*

N.C. – Well, there's psychology and psychology. I don't personally find the sort of psychological accounts you're talking about very interesting. At least not in themselves. What interests me is that a hundred years ago or more people obviously did feel that such accounts added to their enjoyment of the music, gave it a new dimension, enabled engagement with the story the music told. (You'll find lots of that sort of thing in Adolph Kullak's *The Aesthetics of Pianoforte Playing*, for example.) I think it's more interesting to try and recapture that way of experiencing music than simply to dismiss it. I'm also interested in the extent to which performers have created narratives of this kind. (Kullak talks about that too.) Think of Cortot, for example, who left all those wonderful recordings yet created emotional scenes or stories for the music that seem to us today to be not just speculative, as you put it, but plain silly. How did these scenes and stories help him to play so well? How can ways of experiencing music have changed so much in so little time? (Cortot died fifty years ago this year.)

B.T. – *At least Cortot resorted to narrative (empirical) psychology in order to provide a platform for his playing, so his intention was legitimate and had a purpose; but after a hundred years some musicologists are still doing the same thing and struggling to fill in the paper with speculative stories. Is this really worth the effort? Finding a refuge in the comfort zone of a biographical descriptive approach and calling it 'psychology'? Or, even worse, 'interdisciplinarity'?*

N.C. – To be honest, the professionalisation of musicology in the Anglophone world means there's very little of that kind of writing around now, and even in non-academic writing for a general public it now looks very out of date. Actually, as with Cortot, I think it's rather an interesting historical phenomenon. It can also be an interesting geographical phenomenon. I was at a conference in Beijing a few months ago, and there was a paper about Machaut by someone from Shanghai Conservatory. He was arguing that music should be understood in its own terms, as inherently meaningful structure, which is the

sort of paper you might have heard in London around 1970. I wondered why someone would be arguing this in Beijing in 2011, and asked some of the Chinese delegates. The answer was that he was implicitly attacking the established communist tradition of social realist interpretation. A paper on Machaut becomes a kind of political statement.

B.T. – *Musicology as an ideological battlefield! It helps me, in fact, moving forward to the issue of the musicological "weapons". The scientific research nowadays relies on a wide array of tools and methodologies, involving IT and cutting edge technology. High profile academics and students embrace the addictive new technology and become the pioneers of a visionary and a more refined scientific attitude. You yourself wrote an important book on this topic: 'Analysing Musical Multimedia'[15]. In an era of full technological swing, do „vintage values" of research, such as the manuscripts still produce significant results for music history?*

N.C. – Oh, yes. In musicology I would say that applications of new technology rarely make old approaches obsolete (unless we're talking at the level of card indexes versus computer databases). New technology enables you to do different things as well, not instead. That's much more exciting than doing the same old things, only in new ways. Think of what I said about using computers to analyse broad developments in style, working with large amounts of data (drawn from machine-readable scores in the case of compositional style, or sound recordings in the case of performance style). That's something you can't do without new technology. But you don't do it instead of close reading or hearing of individual pieces in the traditional way. You do it as well.

B.T. – *I plead 'guilty'! You know some of my writings well enough not to try pretending otherwise. But what did you mean then (and I'll go back to your article I first cited) when stating: 'Musicology has traditionally been a retrospective discipline. /…/ turning time back so as to arrive at the Urtext'[16]?*

N.C. – Ah, that goes back to what I was saying about the nineteenth century and philology. The European nation states that emerged during that century had to invent themselves into existence, and one of the ways they did that was through the creation of national cultural canons. That happened in literature, and it happened in music. It gave rise to those monumental

[15] Cook, Nicholas, *Analysing Musical Multimedia,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998.
[16] Cook, Nicholas, *'We are All (Ethno)musicologists Now'*, in: Henry Stobart (ed), *The New (Ethno) musicologies*, 2008, p. 58.

series like the Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst (Germany) and Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich (Austria). Their purpose was to retrieve the music of the past, to strip it of all later accretions, to reconstruct it in its original form, to purify it. (You can see an uncomfortable resonance with the discourses of racial origins and purity that also emerged in the nineteenth century and came to the forefront of European politics in the twentieth.) And then the same kind of thinking was applied to later composers, hence the complete, authoritative editions of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest. So musicology was set up in a way that led it to ignore the present and look back to the past, which is what I meant by retrospective, and that placed the idea of the Urtext at its heart. While there is of course an important role for editions within the musicological enterprise, one of the main jobs for my generation of musicologists has been to highlight and critique the unquestioned ideologies that informed this traditional model of musicology, to show just how much that kind of musicology left out about music and about why it matters to people.

B.T. *– From each idea you defended so vividly in our dialogue, one can draw the conclusion that you are in favour of promoting a type of creative musicology, open to all the phenomena of present-day musical life, celebrating a wide diversity of topics which require adapted and updated methodological tools. The time of reclusive musicology, limited to a few topics and sticking to the ground of technical analysis seems to be over, or, let's say it, 'old fashioned'. Can you foresee that musicology will grow new branches in the future, knowing that this discipline is already positioned at the interface between music and other domains (sociology, politics, history, informatics, etc.)? Which are in your opinion the main strands that will arise, and you consider as being legitimate to interrogate the reality of our present and to prepare the reception of the future?*

N.C. – Well, I am tempted to say moving beyond scores towards human interaction and social meaning on the one hand, and towards engagement with the technologies that are replacing notes by new ways of manipulating sound on the other. But prophecy is a mug's game. In 1990 and again in 2000 I contributed to journals that solicited prophecies of the next decade's musicology from all sorts of different people. Some people's prophecies seemed rather like summaries of the work they had been doing over the previous decade. I did better; I summarised the work I was going to do over the coming decade. Perhaps that's what I've just done again. But it's the future of my work, not the future of musicology!

B.T. – *True, but your works opened and set new lines in modern musicology, and so you had a hand in shaping the new road. I would rather focus on Jürgen Bräuninger's words in order to suggest a solution: 'we need a new musicology that cares'*[17]*. Browsing the history of Musicology, from Riemann, Adorno and Dahlhaus to Kofi Agawu, Arnold Whittall or Richard Taruskin (to pick a few high profile scholars of this discipline randomly), one might conclude that a genuine musicologist should master the art of reinvention, should have a keen eye for capturing the most significant contributions in MUSIC (in capital letters), to be visionary in his or her work and, above all, to produce something useful. How would you best describe the portrait of the modern musicologist?*

N.C. – I would prefer to be interesting and wrong than to be boring and right. Of course it would be even better to be interesting and right.

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