Max Planck Research Group

Felt Communities? Emotions in European Music Performances (Concluding Report)

Head: *Sven Oliver Müller*

Research Team 2014–2015

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Overview

The social relations brought into existence by musical performances can be regarded as results of emotional experiences. Publicly accessible emotions trigger people to communicate more easily. Does music create "felt communities"—and if so, how? That is the basic question of the Max Planck Research Group "Felt Communities? Emotions in European Music Performances." It analyzed the historical development of emotions in musical life in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The group consisted of ten historians, musicologists, political scientists, and ethnologists. Learning from and with each other facilitated access to a multitude of different theoretical concepts and disciplines. Our various outcomes showed a remarkable congruency despite our diverse academic backgrounds; our research methods made a common basis for comparison possible. The Research Group began its work in 2010 and ended in summer 2015. This research report contains the main results of our research as well as sketches of the individual projects of the final year's active researchers, namely, Sven Oliver Müller, Marie Louise Herzfeld-Schild, Lena van der Hoven, and Luis-Manuel Garcia, all of whom are meanwhile continuing their research elsewhere.

Our aim was to find out what role music plays as a performative practice for the cohesion of social groups in various historical contexts. No distinction was made between "serious" and "popular," between "classical" and "modern" music. The field of relevant problems and approaches ranged from sociologically inspired analyses of 19th-century church music, historical research on audiences, to studies of techno music.

Music, Emotions, and *Communities:* These are the main categories we worked with. Focusing on emotions as a public form of communication, the aim was to decipher the emotional structure of communities: What role did and does music as an emotional mode play in the development and cohesion of communities? The concept is a history of social and cultural relations in musical life. Instead of defining boundaries between the three investigated categories, we examined the relationships and interactions between music, emotions, and communities. It is a model of communication: Neither the musician, nor the composer, neither the ruler, nor the audience were examined separately. Their relationship could be defined as a chain of communication. Emotional communities are not communities of their own—but, almost by definition, an important aspect of many social groups in which people have common interests and habits. It was the task of the researchers in the group to uncover systems of feeling and to establish what the examined communities define as the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore. At the end of this process of negotiation and consumption, you can frequently find emotional icons in musical life everywhere.

Our research projects complement and extend the findings of psychological and neurobiological studies, according to which individual sounds, chords, and melodies can cause detectable vegetative, cognitive, and emotional reactions. Our historical and aesthetic reception perspective is based on the assumption that music in its entire complexity can only be fully understood when taking into account its emotional impact as well as its specific context. This context consists of performance spaces and artifacts, ranging from concert halls to MP3 players, of physicality such as movement and performance by virtuoso musicians as well as dancers at techno clubs, of learned musical and extra-musical familiarities and individual tastes, and finally and foremost, it consists of the joint hearing experience. Naturally, laboratory conditions cannot offer such complex textures. Therefore, we need to interpret and reconstruct them from a variety of sources including audio and video documents, music reviews and fan magazines, diaries and letters, memorabilia and merchandising products.

It is also necessary to investigate the reception of music for the formation of social groups. We know much more about scores, genres, aesthetic shifts, and the music of great male composers than we know about the impact of music upon the formation of the social sphere.

We suggest a change of perspective, moving away from the study of musical works to an investigation of interpretive processes. The assumption is that the meaning of music is, to a large part, the result of interpretational processes in the public sphere. The same piece of music may evoke different public reactions in relation to different emotions of the performances. Emotions vary over time and place and they are historically, culturally, and socially contingent. Indeed, emotional experiences themselves may be subject to change. Some feelings strike particular resonance with us today—for instance, shame and compassion—which people around 1900 hardly acknowledged.

The main goal of our research group was to investigate emotional practices and procedures as well as their effects on societies since the 1780s. Hence, one analytical focus was placed on the historical process of musical performances and their political and social interpretation. Our projects could shed more light on the social and emotional meaning of music for communities both of the past and the present. We concentrated on those communities' effects rather than on the analysis of singular musical works or mu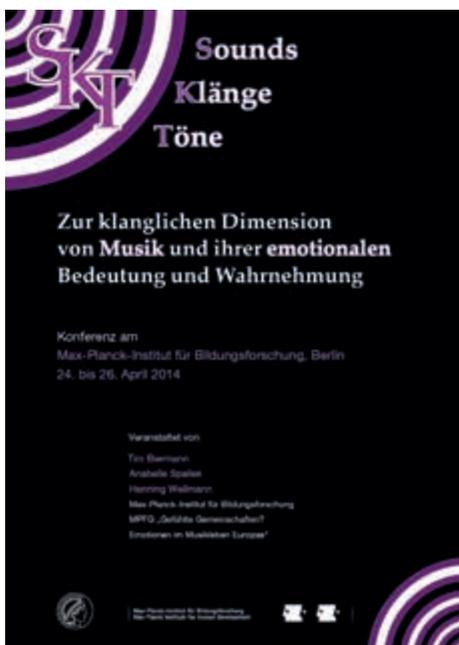sical genres. Political and aesthetical discourses, social practices, and the processes of community formation were thus explored via this innovative change of perspective.

This context stimulated a different way of researching society and the reception of music. This was due not only to competing emotional interpretations but also to the absence of certain communities from emotional exchange. We could often find consistent communication and strategies of refusal right next to each other; the interaction of these two behavioral patterns formed the foundation of solidarity and fragmentation of communities in musical life. Hence, we established five categories in order to grasp societal context and possibilities of action of groups over time, places, and musical genres: practices, spaces, styles, discourses, and functions. This not only facilitates the analysis of each category but also the comparability of our individual projects and topics.

Conferences

The group's conferences demonstrate how its research is the result of fruitful scientific exchange with many colleagues inside and outside the Institute. The weekly research group meeting was an important medium for academic communication. The variety of conferences, workshops, and cooperation projects reveals the outcome of these research activities among the disciplines of history, musicology, political sciences, and ethnology. The group's doctoral students (Tim Biermann, Anabelle Spallek, and Henning Wellmann) organized the conference, *Sounds Klänge Töne: Zur klanglichen Dimension von Musik und ihrer emotionalen Bedeutung und Wahrnehmung,* from 24 to 26 April 2014. It was concerned with musical sound worlds and their emotional effect in time-bounded social and cultural contexts. How and by whom is music attributed to emotions? What meanings do sounds receive through the attribution of emotions and vice versa? What emotional patterns of perception can be distinguished in specific historical sound contexts and settings? These are examples of questions that were discussed.

The final workshop of our research group, *Emotionsgeschichte und Musik: Forschungsperspektiven und Methoden,* took place on 18 and 19 September 2015 in Berlin. This workshop aimed to discuss and assess essential methodologies of our works as well as at inviting new perspectives on the relationship of music and the history of emotion. The workshop served as an interdisciplinary platform to present innovative ideas to research music and emotion, on the one hand, and to discuss future perspectives and different

Sounds
Klänge
Töne

Zur klanglichen Dimension
von **Musik** und ihrer **emotionalen**
Bedeutung und Wahrnehmung

Konferenz am
Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, Berlin
24. bis 26. April 2014

Veranstaltet von

Tim Biermann
Anabelle Spallek
Henning Wellmann
Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung
MPFG „Gefühlte Gemeinschaften?
Emotionen im Musikleben Europas"

approaches to, and applications of the term "emotion," on the other hand. The workshop's speakers hence sketched further and new approaches to the emotional meaning of music for existing and forming communities. The speakers not only extended the time frame to the period before 1700, they also expanded our understanding of what music could be. The workshop aimed at bringing scientists from a multitude of fields around one table. This interdisciplinary approach promised novel input and original perspectives from the integration of various methods and the common effort of different disciplines. Subsequently, we came closer to the comprehension of emotional discourse, and we discussed definitions of emotional practices and emotional spaces of musical practice. Participants presented topics ranging across fields such as music reception, music history, social history, music aesthetics, and musical analysis. The list of workshop participants comprised leading representatives from different disciplines as well as up-and-coming young scientists and master students. The spectrum of topics combined opera of the modern age, hi-fi culture of the 1950s, dance culture, and the history of the British stock exchange. Also, Susanne Rode-Breymann (Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media) agreed to collaborate in the publication of a volume representing this workshop. Our research group illustrated its methodologies by presenting different case studies and approaches. These focus on musical places and topics that are so important that they allow for historical generalization. The emphasis is on comparable cultural performances at different social places in different political contexts. The point is to ask whether different musical performances in different places account for similar emotional effects on audiences. The differences in musical life are obvious—but the emotional similarities are nevertheless clear.

The Infinite Varieties of Feelings—Conductors as Producers of Musical Meaning

Conductors are a mysterious breed. Oozing self-belief, elevated on a podium, they are endowed by critics and public alike with magical abilities. There is no more obvious expression of power than the performance of a conductor. Yet, for all this power, what they actually do remains an enigma. In fact, it is one of the most frequently asked questions of an orchestral musician. But how much difference does the average conductor make? Even in the case of the talented few maestri, the skills on offer are subject to an indefinable alchemy of charisma and self-belief. And as is the case with any dictator, what seems paramount is the ability to inspire confidence in their powers. Conductors have to advise the members of an orchestra by testing the musicians' technical abilities, on the one hand, and by demonstrating the cultural meaning of a composition for a wider public, on the other. Therefore, conductors are interested in emotions as a cultural practice. This project has a focus on the conveyance of music via emotions incorporated in the conductors' work. The aim is to find out how conductors are familiar with employing feelings in order to share their visions with the musicians through emotional imagery, gestures, and anecdotes. We believe that conductors especially make emotions visible and tangible through music. But what exactly are emotions from the perspective of a conductor, and where do they become vital? For instance, we ask how conductors translate music into emotional language during rehearsal. It is interesting to discover the metaphors, gestures, and jokes through which they manage to captivate not only the musicians but also their audience.

Our aim is to compare highly controlled forms of behaviors with highly expressive facial gestures and body movements. It will be interesting for the impact of emotions in musical

Researcher

Sven Oliver Müller

life to analyze how conductors try to model feelings during a rehearsal to produce, for instance, an "ugly" sound in a certain passage in which they believe it suits the expressive meaning of the music. We hope to find out how emotionally charged pieces of art acquire meaning among musicians, entrepreneurs, and audiences. We have just finished this series of interviews with Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Christian Thielemann, Marek Janowski, Simone Young, and Kristiina Poska. It is our goal to use some of these interviews as source material for a publication and to try to reach a broader audience in public discussions.

Figure 1. Conductor.
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Researcher

Marie Louise Herzfeld-Schild

Between Sense and Sensibility: Emotional Aspects of Religious Chants in the 19th Century

The age-long discussions between the church authorities on the right way of plainchant singing have always been concerned with the question of how much emotionality religion can tolerate. Because music, as a "language of emotions," seems to touch people more directly than words, its appropriate form and content have always been of greatest importance. Therefore, church music, allowed during various periods of time, can be understood as a mirror for the theoretical emotional do's and don'ts of each period, while the preferences and wishes of the faithful with their particular musical-emotional religiosity often form a practical counter pole to it.

The project focuses on the emotional dimensions of church singing in the 19th century, considering both theory and practice. The main thesis is that, on the basis of the then theoretical discussions about the "true" way of plainchant singing as well as their practical implications, a new sacralization and thereby re-emotionalization of religiosity—a "religious feeling"—can be traced that emerged in the course of the late 18th and 19th centuries in both Christian denominations of the German-speaking world as a backlash to the rationalism of Enlightenment theology.

The project proposes that this increase in religiosity and the role of emotion in it can be detected in the song books, religious song collections, theological treatises, and hymnological writings of the 19th century. These sources reveal contemporary aspects of lived religiosity, devotion, and musical-religious everyday life that, on the one hand, shed light on the significance of music in and for the church and, on the other, contribute to the history of emotions of the 19th century. Church songs and song books as cultural documents allow for a broad cultural and historical investigation with a social and emotional focus. Considering the assumption that emotions are culturally acquired and can accordingly be shaped and changed, interpretations of individual cultures of emotion can be made on the basis of the cultural practices of the past.

By analyzing the emotional vocabulary, the emotional topology of religion and music, and the role of religious singing for establishing "felt communities," the project attempts to answer (1) how singing in church cultivated emotions; (2) whether an emotional "surplus" or extra emotional weight was assigned to music in religious practices in contrast to mere spoken words; and (3) how "religious feeling" in the 19th century and its ideological basis can come to be defined by means of the historical texts on religious singing.

The project takes its departure at the huge implications that the Enlightenment had on singing in Christian churches. Within Enlightenment theology, rational thought became more and more important for religion, while the sensory perception of religion was highly regulated. Accordingly, in both Christian denominations, church music was made to conform to this primacy of rationality, and visual and acoustic embellishments were even to some extent removed from churches. Reli-

gious revelation was combined with rational comprehension in contrast to prior notions of intuitively feeling and sensing the divine. Through the influence of Josephinism in Austria in the 1770s and 1780s and later also in Germany, religious services were changed, feast days cancelled, processions shortened, and communal rosary prayer banned. Large-scale masses were no longer performed and, instead, church members became actively involved in shaping the musical aspects of services. Masses in German were introduced in Catholic churches, and the genre of the "German sung mass" has its origins in this period, which is known as the "Late Catholic Enlightenment" and lasted until around the mid-19th century.

At that point, however, a strong restoration movement gathered pace, which even attempted the reintroduction of Latin Gregorian chant for reasons of feeling and sensing the divine rather than thinking about it. Therefore, singing was reintroduced into service for just this purpose of deepening the role of emotion in religion and religiosity.

In their prefaces, their structure, their content, and their distribution, the hymnals of the late 18th and 19th centuries show how the huge changes in lived religiosity—from the purism of Enlightenment theology to the singing of emotionally charged hymns within the restoration—were practically realized within the religious communities. Especially comparisons between consecutive song books, their song selection, the selection process and justification tell us a lot about the changing role of emotion in the religiosity of that time. The following questions emerge: Which social, political, or theological motivations form the basis for the emotional and musical concepts and practices in religiosity? Can devotional differences be found in the musical-religious emotionality of that time? And finally: Is it possible to construe information about the understanding of music as a "language of emotions" in the late 18th and 19th centuries from the interplay of the theological-theoretical discussions and the musical-religious practices found in the sources?

Perspectives of a History of Emotion of the 19th-Century Opera

The project on the formation of emotional communities in the 19th-century opera started in December 2013. It investigates the representation, creation, and reflection of "religious feeling" in German opera houses and its effect on the formation of emotional communities on stage as well as in the audience. The interdisciplinary approach incorporates methods from the fields of emotion theory, music sociology, history, and theater studies. One central term is that of "Innerlichkeit," which raises the question of whether this "Innerlichkeit" existed at all and in what way it was and is presented in the opera house. As Roger Parker said, 19th-century opera should not only be considered a place of reflection on societal and cultural topics, it should rather be considered as the place of creation of said topics; and, in doing so, opera gives those topics language and space to become a private emotion and infuse the "real" world.

The 19th century manifested a growing need for religious music as well as for theatrical representations of religious topics outside of

Researcher

Lena van der Hoven

churches. This phenomenon also showed on the operatic stage in form of an increasing negotiation of religiosity and religion as an aesthetic and emotional paradigm. While the performance of a religious scene on the operatic stage was a taboo before 1800, the 1820s not only propagated such presentation, it also criticized the church via performances.

Religions and confessions already present emotional communities. Praying is a fundamental act of religious practice as well as an essential contribution to the formation and preservation of communities of faith. Opera can be compared to praying in that it is a moment of the human way of interpreting the self and the world.

The research project can be divided into two parts: The first part concerns religious scenes and prayers on the operatic stage, and it contextualizes this performed religiosity with musical and textual structures. The focus is on musical, corporal, and gestural presentations of religiosity; thereby, special attention is paid to the depictions of communal, choral

praying, on the one side, and of individual, personal prayer, on the other side. The second part of my research project takes a closer look at the formation of communities amongst the members of the audience. It will be especially interesting to see whether choral and individual prayers evoke different reactions and whether one depiction of praying is more likely to create an emotional community. One could assume that the dynamics of the choral scenes have a more rousing effect on the audience, whereas personal prayers offer a higher potential for identification.

Researcher

Luis-Manuel Garcia

"Can You Feel It, Too?": Music, Affect, and Intimacy in Contemporary Urban Electronic Dance Music Scenes

This ethnographic project focuses on social behavior on the dance floors of electronic dance music (EDM) events, where crowds of strangers come together and get on in un-strangerly ways, participating in euphoric performances of utopian togetherness that emerge through gestures of social warmth, moments of candor, and the sharing of intense musical experiences. On the dance floors of nightclubs, loft parties, and raves, partygoers engage in forms of stranger-intimacy that short-circuit conventional narratives of intimacy and transgress normal, "daylight" decorum. But how does such intense stranger-intimacy arise and endure? In what registers is it felt and articulated? The project addresses these questions through an intertwining of ethnographic research in the electronic dance music scenes of Paris, Chicago, and Berlin; the analysis of these scenes' musical aesthetics; and an engagement with current scholarship on themes of affect, touch, and intimacy. This multi-sited project is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted across three cities and between the years of 2006 and 2010. The project aims to impact the fields of music and dance studies, anthropology, popular culture/cultural studies, sexuality studies, and critical geography—particularly those subfields that take interest in music scenes and live events. Most partygoers seem to want fluid and capacious forms of belonging that are loosely held together by musical affinities and by the dance floor's affective intensities, but they must contend with the contradictions inherent in embedding such imagined worlds in one that is already striated with exclusions. They want distinction without discrimination—belonging beyond the categorical exclusions of identity—and they sustain the fragile *sense* of such a utopian world through a sort of socially-operative vagueness, routed through aesthetics and affect rather than identity. But these fluid practices of vague belonging are not entirely buoyant: Beneath these utopian fantasies of open belonging, the testimony of participants as well as field-work observations reveal fissures, inequities, and exclusions that often go unexamined. This project is dedicated to exploring how such scenes can support transient-but-real world-making projects by striking an ambivalent bargain with vagueness, which both enables these worlds to "feel" imminently possible and provides cover for their underlying contradictions. By focusing on contemporary dance events, this project also brings spatiality and corporeal co-presence to the fore, reconceptualizing stranger-intimacy through relays between space, affect, and music. It engages with current research in urban studies and critical geography that theorize the connections between stranger-sociability, affect, and built environment.

This project has already produced two essay-length publications, with a monograph-length publication remaining the final goal. The first output from this project was a chapter in an edited volume, which provided an ethnographic account of the loose forms of sociability at electronic music events. It developed "liquidarity" as a concept to describe how this stranger-intimacy works in contexts of anonymity and face-to-face contact. The second major publication was a peer-reviewed article in the inaugural issue of *Sound Studies,* a journal dedicated to this emergent and dynamic field of research; this article provides an analysis of "sonic texture" in several recordings of electronic dance music, highlighting how texture and tactil-

ity provide an experiential relay between vibratory sensation and affect—thus providing a theoretical model for conceptualizing the transmission of affect via sound. Finally, the planned monograph (provisional title: *Together, Somehow: Music, Affect, and Intimacy on the Dancefloor*) is now in the final phase of drafting. In order to expand the public impact of the research project and of this research group, Luis-Manuel Garcia wrote several feature articles for the leading magazine for electronic dance music, *Resident Advisor;* and performed an hour-long interview podcast for *Resident Advisor* to discuss his current research in great detail.

This project intertwines with a second, newer research project that is currently in the data-collection/fieldwork stage. This second postdoctoral research project, entitled *The Techno Jetset: Mobility, Tourism, and the Creative Class in Berlin's Electronic Dance Music Scenes,* examines the recent emergence of "techno tourism" in Berlin as both a cultural and commercial phenomenon as well as its entanglement with various forms of spatial and social mobility. The initial phase of fieldwork already revealed that many "techno tourists" also make the decision to move to Berlin for longer stays, thus expanding this project's scope to consider not only tourism but also migration, which in turn raises issues concerning the economic and working conditions of "creative class" industries as well as the impact of gentrification on urban music scenes. Of particular relevance to this research group's theme is the role that feelings and emotions play in grounding both tourists' and migrants' sense of belonging to their adopted city; in particular, music plays a central role in creating affective points of connection between those invested in these musical genres, which helps them to sustain a sense of musical community as well as of belonging to a local, spatially-grounded music scene. As a secondary project to the book manuscript, this research has already led to two articles: one examining the affective dimensions of civic and musical belonging for "techno migrants" living in Berlin and the other providing an ethnographic sketch of "techno tourists" and their neoromantic relation to Berlin as a postindustrial city. A further article is planned that traces the implication of local EDM scenes in current debates about tourism and gentrification in Berlin.

The Research Group's Results

A preliminary result of our research from the years 2014 and 2015 is that it seems promising to examine isolated performances and identify broader historical processes on the way. It can be useful to compile a bigger picture out of little mosaic pieces. We would like to conclude with three considerations:

(1) Music gains its emotional agency from the practices, performances, and discourses in the musical life of a particular time. The emotional agency of music is a perfect vehicle for consumers to place themselves in an "imagined community." Music's potential as a medium of "imagining communities" is twofold, however. It can both induce submersion into the mainstream or can construct spaces of difference. The emotional reception of music might not always generate a community, but can shape it.

(2) Music is more than music. It is formed not only by scores, pieces, and sounds, but by its complete contexts, including performance spaces, artefacts, and bodies, as well as the behavior of audiences and learned musical or extra-musical tendencies. Therefore, the actions of musicians and audiences should be an important object of future analysis.

(3) It seems hard to detect similarities in the history of emotions in musical life. However, it can be observed that music, emotions, and communities develop and interact within comparable paradigms. Listeners have the potential to hear different things in the same music, but the fact that many of them do not is an indication of the degree to which groups experience common perceptual adaptation. Researchers will continue to investigate the development of emotional settings.

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(last update: Spring 2017)

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