
CONVERSATIONS

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VIRTUAL PANEL DISCUSSION

How do you evaluate the state of printed media in comparison to electronic media? Do printed media have a future?

N.Sch. I believe that, in the immediate future – within the next decade or so – print media still have a future. While technologies are developing at a rapid rate, and while the general public is accepting new technologies, including electronic devices for any kind of literature, academia is changing slowly. Universities in both Europe and North America are still valuing traditional print media

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more than digital media for hiring scholars at professorial ranks. The established peer-review system for traditional print media is valued higher than any kind of digital publications, even if the digital publications are peer-reviewed. Certainly, anyone can publish electronically; by administrators this is, still, seen as an obstacle in the acceptance of digital publications in hiring, tenure, or promotion procedures. Likewise, however, can anyone publish in print media and circumvent stringent peer-review, especially with the many ‘commercial’ journals that flooded the market, in which anyone can publish articles for a fee in a ‘peer-reviewed’ journal that is even indexed by RILM and other research indexes. The latter problem is known to the academy, and academic institu-

tions try to identify such publications by establishing point or other value systems for evaluations of journal article publications. Academic institutions have yet to establish procedures to separate high-quality digital publications from low-quality digital publications. Nevertheless, academic institutions will eventually have to go with the time, and in a decade or so, print publications will have lost its dominance in academia.

C.W. It is difficult for me to offer any kind of objective opinion on the future of printed versus electronic media. I’m of the generation – just – that grew up without computers. I even wrote my doctoral thesis by hand before typing it into a computer, though at the time (1988) I suspect I was already being somewhat old-fashioned. However, my generation is also the first, I suppose, that could never imagine living without electronic media. Today I read far more online than I read printed media, and as for the few journals to which I subscribe privately, I have begun cancelling my print subscriptions, as I have simply run out of space to keep the printed journals on my shelves. All the same, I still pre-



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fer leafing through the journals on the shelves in my university library, and would hate everything there to go online. At the risk of being proven wrong in the near future, I do believe that printed media have a future, and I wouldn't want to work with a publisher that only produced e-books, for example. I want the (admittedly few!) people who read my books to be able to hold a physical copy in their hands. Just as I like holding a physical, printed book in my own hands.

As for music journals, I also believe that printed copies will continue to be made (and should be), though I suspect that more and more people are going to read them online.

M.C. Let me answer with a telling conversation I had with a librarian of a Technical University in The Netherlands some years ago. He was asked by the University board to reduce the amount of subscriptions to scientific journals with 20%. The main reason for this rather draconic move was not only budgetary, but first of all because of a simple lack of space. Of course, the librarian considered this task as a real disaster. However, what turned out to be the most astonishing was that in the 4 years that followed after this move, not one student or professor ever came to complain or to ask where the latest issues of these journals had gone. Perhaps they simply didn't miss them for their academic work; however, more likely is the explanation that so many journals can be found online these days and their separate articles are easy to download. I don't mean to say that printed journals have no future at all, but there should be a clear added value to have them in print.

How do you assess the state of musical and musicological journals in the context of the crisis of the humanities, and do you believe it is necessary to introduce novelties in this sphere (in the form of a new circle of themes, methods, procedures, such as stimulating transdisciplinary connections and suchlike)?

M.C. In general I think that the Humanities have not been able to formulate proper alternatives to a *Zeitgeist* and its contemporary discourses in which econocentric thinking and clear, verifiable, and concrete 'solutions' to major

problems are leading. However, we can also see a certain transformation and alteration with regard to the dominance of neo-liberalism, individuality, and market forces: ecology and climate changes are prominent issues on global agendas, refugees and terrorist attacks make us reconsider our ethical and moral standards, and welfare seems to be(come) more important than prosperity. If music(ological) journals can move from sometimes quite esoteric content (one exponent being a persistent formalism) to establishing a meaningful relation with what is currently going on in the world (socially, culturally, politically, economically, ethically, aesthetically, etc.), their existence will prove to be useful, necessary, and indispensable.

N. Sch. Despite the current and near-future dominance of print publications in music research, we need to clear the path for the acceptance of digital publications in academia. That can be achieved (a) by following stringent peer-review procedures for digital publications, (b) by well-known scholars to publish digitally, (c) by establishing or further developing digital journals into true multi-media platforms that integrate text, graphics, music, and video / animations, and (d) by accepting and encouraging intra- and inter- (trans-) disciplinary research in our globalized world. I would like to reflect on the latter for a moment. Inter- (or trans-) disciplinary work has been praised and officially encouraged for at least two decades now. In reality, most interdisciplinary work is dominated by one discipline with regard to its approach or methodology and ‘touching’ on one or more other disciplines. True interdisciplinary work that merges methods and themes is still rare. The same is true for intradisciplinary work, such as collaborations between composers and scholars. True inter- and intra-disciplinary work would undoubtedly introduce novelties.

C.W. I’ve often read about this ‘crisis in the humanities’, but I believe, in a certain sense, that every era gets the crises it deserves. I do think that neo-liberalism (in my native country: Thatcherism and its aftermath) has played a negative role in intellectual life over the past thirty-odd years. I remember Thatcher’s education secretary telling a group of foreign graduates on prestigious scholarships that the government was only going to fund ‘useful’ subjects in future – in other words, economics, engineering and suchlike, definitely not history or music. And the conservatories in Britain today face major funding problems because the government has cut their subsidies. But let’s not fall into a state of sheer negativity here. When I stop to consider the major innovations that have taken place in the humanities in the past two decades, there’s been a lot of good. And since the advent of online databases such as JSTOR, RILM & the other ‘R’s, Hofmeister XIX etc., life for a music researcher has perhaps never been better. I am not convinced that there is a need for journals to introduce major

innovations beyond going online. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary connections are always going to happen of their own accord; I don't think we need to push them specifically.

What is the urgent problem in the present-day 'journal' sphere and how – in this light – should New Sound take further action, in your opinion?

N.Sch. The urgent problems are the academic (administrative) non-acceptance of digital publications, the limited advancement of true multi-media journals / magazines (platforms), and the limitations of current intra- and interdisciplinary research. The acceptance of digital publications will advance with high-profile scholars publishing in such journals and with the emphasis of stringent peer-review procedures. Journals such as *New Sound* should continue the concept of open-access journals, use current-day technological capabilities to offer advanced multi-media publications, and seek out true intra- and interdisciplinary work. To give an example of intradisciplinary work, a publication could contain a composer's score, the performers' recording (audio and / or video) of this piece, and a scholarly work on this composition (including graphics, analytical scores, and / or videos or animations). . . all in the same issue of the journal. Likewise, to give an example of interdisciplinary work, a publication by a group of scholars could focus on new music from a social, political, psychological, historical, and analytical perspective, without limiting the approach to the usual needs and requirements of the music disciplines. In addition, more scholarship with a broader topic and / or with generalizations that a broader audience might be interested; specifically, articles on *one* composition should be avoided, unless the author makes generalizations that enables the readers to use the findings in other studies or for other purposes. Last but not least, more pedagogical scholarship on new music and / or scholarship on creativity is still very much needed: for example, scholarship on composition pedagogy, articles on how new music can help fostering creativity, and studies on using new compositions in a variety of teaching settings; these could be used by teachers in music classrooms from Kindergarten through post-graduate studies and would, thus, broaden the readership of the journal.

C.W. I think the really urgent problems are all about funding today – making sure that good journals can continue to exist and publish high-quality work. As for journal content, I believe that there is good reason to remain faithful to a specific niche, either geographically or otherwise. What once was considered 'peripheral' in the West has become increasingly mainstream as people and ideas pass more easily across what were once rigid borders. I see it in the classes

I teach in Basel, where it is perfectly normal to have students of a dozen or more nationalities, many of them from the former Eastern Bloc. It's the same at all the main conservatories across Europe. So for a journal to feature articles and reviews on 'international' topics while retaining a 'national' focus – as *New Sound* does – seems to me to be a positive, forward-looking stance. Perhaps the *New Sound* website could profit from featuring links to sites for readers to hear music by Serbian composers and/or Serbian musicians. If someone is interested in knowing more about Serbian music, it would be nice to be able to listen to some by clicking on links on the *New Sound* website – even if it's only to the Youtube videos of half a dozen Serbian composers. The standard of performance among Serbian musicians is extremely high, and it would be good to feature links to allow people outside the country to experience that. I can't find any music information centre for Serbia (though there is one in Slovenia and another in Croatia), which suggests that there is a gap in online information provision that perhaps *New Sound* could help to fill. Overall, however, I think that *New Sound* has been fulfilling a truly important role for the past two-and-a-half decades, and we all owe a great debt of gratitude to Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman for her work as its editor.

M.C. I could mention a few 'problems' (which are, simultaneously, opportunities) with current journals:

- In general there is more supply than demand; I get the impression that scholars at universities are obliged to write rather than to read. This implies that too many articles are written without being read, without any urgency, and without a real and innovative contribution to topical issues.
- “Writing about music is like dancing about architecture – it's a stupid thing to do.” It is not exactly clear who is the rightful 'owner' of this quote and although I certainly not agree completely with the author, there is something interesting in this sentence. My whole academic life I struggle against articles about music in which scholars need 7 pages to describe 1 bar of music while after such a description one still has no clue at all as to how this 1 bar sounds. Electronic music journals can simply solve this problem and therefore are to be preferred over printed ones. Sometimes alternative 'sign systems' instead of language are better equipped to convey specific knowledge.
- IMO, all academic publications should be publicly available at all time: Open Access. I want to share my knowledge and ideas with whomever is interested instead of having to ask first if they can pay a publisher a certain and often quite large amount of money.
- Although specialized journals certainly have a right to exist, I strongly believe in journals in which attention is paid to music (*all* music), but also to sound

art, sound studies, sonic ecology, auditory culture, etc. and this not only from a humanities and/or social science perspective but also with insights coming from the hard sciences.

New Sound has managed to rediscover itself several times over the past 25 years. If the editors can maintain the attitude of continuously exploring new (sonic and reflective) spaces, the future for this great journal is guaranteed.