

Conference Report: Musicians and Musicologists as Teachers: How to Construct Musical Comprehension for Students (Bologna, May 29–30, 2014)

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At the Nineteenth Congress of the International Musicological Society (Rome, July 1–7, 2012) Prof. Giuseppina La Face (University of Bologna) chaired a Study Session devoted to a theme of great significance for musicology: “Transmission of Musical Knowledge: Constructing a European Citizenship.” During the session, seventeen speakers—musicologists and educationalists from China, Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the USA—presented papers which addressed several issues, focusing on four main topics: (a) pedagogic and disciplinary foundations and criteria; (b) the historical perspective in music education; (c) music teaching, in Europe and abroad; (d) models of didactic methodology as applied to art music and music history.¹ All speakers in the 2012 Study Session expressed a keen interest in promoting these topics on an international basis, and proposed forming an IMS Study Group especially dedicated to these issues. The IMS Directory formally approved the Study Group in November 2012. It was named “Transmission of Knowledge as a Primary Aim in Music Education” and is currently based at the University of Bologna, Department of the Arts.²

More recently (Bologna, May 29–30, 2014), the newly founded Study Group hosted an international conference to mark its official opening. The meeting, titled “Musicians and Musicologists as Teachers: How to Construct Musical Comprehension for Students,” was promoted in collaboration with the Association “Il Saggiatore musicale” (<http://www.saggiatoremusicale.it>) and the Department of the Arts, University of Bologna.

1. All the papers from this Study Session, written in English, German and Italian, were recently collected in the last two issues of the online annual journal *Musica Docta* 3 (2013), <http://musicadocta.unibo.it/issue/view/402/>; and Special Issue (2014), <http://musicadocta.unibo.it/issue/view/427>. All papers are available in at least two different languages, and an English version is always included.

2. Information about the Study Group is located at <http://www.ims-education.net>.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss theoretical and practical issues related to the daily teaching activities of musicologists and musicians in the transmission of musical knowledge, with special regard to listening and historical perspectives.

Giuseppina La Face's keynote ("Musicology and Music Pedagogy: An Unnatural Divorce") outlined the conference's basic position: that throughout the twentieth century, while musicologists have worked intensively to advance the field, they have not paid as much attention to music pedagogy (i.e., the discipline that studies human education through music) and systematic music instruction, which we term "music didactics" (which deals with the issues relating to the transposition of musical and musicological content).³ We would like to emphasize here the distinction we draw between 'pedagogy' and 'didactics.' The former is a philosophical discipline dealing with the process of education of individuals. 'Didactics,' on the other hand, deals with the transmission of knowledge (content, methods, techniques, etc.). To put it drastically: pedagogy's object is the human being itself (in the process of its education), while the object of didactics is knowledge, and the ways to pass it down from teacher to learner. Of course, distinguishing these two branches is crucial in music education as well.

With few notable exceptions, musicology and pedagogic-didactic studies, in Italy and in the Western world in general, have usually followed parallel paths that have only rarely met. As a consequence, music pedagogy and didactics have mainly developed outside universities, often in an empirical and irregular manner, and without drawing from the fundamental source of musicological "learned knowledge" (i.e., what the French educationalist Yves Chevallard refers to as "savoir savant," or that which is learned, as opposed to "savoir enseigné," or that which is taught).⁴

Accepting these premises as a starting point, scholars from Canada, Germany, Italy, and Russia presented a wide variety of papers at the conference. Paolo Fabbri (University of Ferrara) presented a paper on "A Didactic Challenge: Teaching History of Music," which focused on the importance of teaching music from a historical perspective, arguing that it serves as the basis on which both musicologists and performers can provide their students with musical knowledge at every level of education.

Luca Aversano (University of Rome III) and Cesarino Ruini (University of Bologna) encouraged a similar methodological approach, suggesting two practical teaching strategies that combine listening and music history. Aversano

3. This *Journal* 5, no. 1 (2014): 157–63, <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/168/235>.

4. Yves Chevallard and Marie-Alberte Johsua, *La Transposition Didactique: du Savoir Savant au Savoir Enseigné* (Grenoble: La Pensée Sauvage, 1985).

discussed “Military Images in Early Nineteenth-Century Violin Concertos,” starting with a series of musical examples from the repertoire considered in their historical context, suggesting that such examples can be used in both specialized and more general pedagogical situations as a means of teaching social and political history. Ruini’s paper, “Pathways and Recurrence of Medieval Musical Forms,” was on the importance of considering each musical form (even the most remote) within its authentic social and cultural context, taking into account the matrices and genetic processes of its development, so that both teachers and students can understand each repertoire in the light of its historical meaning and compositional practice.

Levon Akopyan (State Institute for the Arts in Moscow) presented on “Theoretical Conceptions in Musicology as a Potential Obstacle to Musical Comprehension,” in which he showed that important but highly complex doctrines (like the “metro-tectonic” theory of Georgy Konyus, Boleslav Yavorsky’s “modal rhythm” theory, the “intonation” theory of Boris Asafyev, Yury Kholopov’s conception of general logical principles of harmony, Schenkerian analysis, and music semiotics), which strive to explain the multitude of observed musical phenomena, can actually “turn off” students from understanding music. Elaborating on methodological questions, Edmund J. Goehring (University of Western Ontario), talked about some of the problematic aspects associated with the widespread tendency to classify Western art music according to a taxonomy of “musical styles,” warning against the misuse of such stylistic categories, which tend to flatten out our understanding of historical reality. (The title of his paper was quite revealing in this respect: “*De stilo et opere*, or, Looking for the Rule.”) Taking a more specific approach, Irina Susidko (Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, Moscow) presented on an issue that is relevant both for music theory and for pedagogy in Russian conservatories and musical academies: the place due to eighteenth-century Italian aria within the general system of musical forms (“Musical-Theoretical Study of the Aria Form in Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera and the Transformation of the High School Course of Musical Form”).

In her discussion of music performance didactics, Catherine Vickers (Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt am Main) presented her own instructional two-volume work, *The Listening Hand* (Mainz: Schott, 2007–2008), in which she proposes an extensive collection of piano exercises aimed at reforming the acquisition of piano technique from the point of view of contemporary piano music by encouraging pupils to reflect on musical and pianistic parameters that are typical of the keyboard repertoire of the last century. In a similar approach, Oliver Kern (also from the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt am Main) explained the ways in which a pianist who works daily on the classical Viennese repertoire will arrive at a correct

performance on the basis of historical and stylistic considerations. Kern's student Yeseul Kim performed the examples at the piano for the audience.

Svetlana Savenko (Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory) gave a paper called "Theory and Practice of New Music in the Academic Courses of the Moscow State Conservatory," which covered teaching attitudes from the point of view of the composers, performers, teachers, and music historians active in Russia from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. At the end of the meeting, Maurizio Giani (University of Bologna) proposed some practical strategies to introduce undergraduate students to the aesthetic appreciation of art music.

The common thread running through all the papers was the relevance attributed to the Western musical heritage as part of any citizen's general education, and for her or his intellectual and aesthetic education in particular. Because our art music heritage can play such a decisive role in interconnecting various fields of knowledge (linguistics, literature, art, history, philosophy, science, etc.), it may also constitute a powerful tool for stimulating the intellectual and aesthetic participation of individuals from all backgrounds in broad, international communities in Europe and overseas. (Of course this is not meant to underestimate the social role of various genres of popular music.)

Thanks to the eminent musicians and musicologists who convened last May in Bologna, and to the close collaboration and exchanges that took place between them under the aegis of the International Musicological Society (represented at the meeting by its President, Dinko Fabris), the conference marked a significant step forward in the international dialogue on music pedagogy.