Universität zu Köln
Musikwissenschaftliches Institut

Symposium: Music – Mind – eMotion

10 July 2026

Abstracts

11.15 – 11.45 Lara Pearson (University of Cologne)

Adjusting to the other through gesture: Interaction in Karnatak vocal performance

Music can be understood as a form of sonic, bodily and social interaction. This is evident in live performance where, in addition to sonic interaction between musicians, we can see performers and audience members responding to each other and to the sounds produced through modalities such as gesture, facial expression, utterance and dance.

In this talk, I explore music performance as interpersonal, embodied interaction through the lens of my research on gesture in Karnatak music lessons and concerts in South India. Here, I focus on details of gesture, gaze, facial expression, utterance and song that constitute these interactions. In particular, I examine participants' use of addressee gestures and gestural backchannels, which are gestures made by the auditor rather than the speaker/singer. These can be considered audiencing gestures in the sense that they act to audience the other person – providing evidence that they are being attended to and understood. In light of these analyses and based on theoretical work from pragmatist and phenomenological traditions, I discuss how such gestures can contribute to teachers' and students' grip over their interactions, both with the other person and with the music performed.

11.45 – 12.15 Christopher Werner (University of Cologne)

Applying the Circumplex Model to History: Compositional Correlates of Emotion in Early 19th-Century Music Reception

In a collaboration between historical musicology and music psychology, the CHEar project investigates what kind of music elicited specific emotions in historical German-speaking audiences. The period under study is 1789 to 1825; the four emotions—terror, cheerfulness, tenderness, and sadness—are each related to one of the four quadrants of James A. Russell's Circumplex Model. Since the listeners of 1800 are gone, the relevant musical passages are identified through contemporary writing on musical experience (concert reviews, opera reports, and essays). These

passages, transcribed into MusicXML, then undergo computational analysis aimed at the central question: does the music associated with one emotion share compositional features that systematically distinguish it from the others—do passages experienced as, say, terrifying, share features that set them apart from those felt to be cheerful, tender, or sad?
The talk outlines the project's approach and focuses on the technical pipeline developed for the analysis, along with its current limitations and open challenges.

12:15 – 12.45 Hauke Egermann (University of Cologne)

Social bonding through interpersonal entrainment in live music performance settings

Spatial co-presence between performers and audiences and temporal simultaneity of performance and audience experience have been described as the two main characteristics of a live performance. These two factors allow for performer-audience interactions, which our research has shown to lie at the core of the audience experience of liveness (between performers/the music and audiences, and between audience members). Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that synchronized movements during engagement with music lead to social bonding between those who move and entrain together. This lecture will present theoretical models exploring how these interactions affect live performance audiences, including the 4E cognition framework, social psychological theories, and emotion induction mechanisms. I will then provide an overview of various methodological approaches to studying audience responses, including findings focusing on subjective, behavioral, and physiological measures. Finally, I will conclude by describing how mutual influences between performers and audiences could be studied in future research to further understand the social bonding effects of the live music experience.

14.45 – 15.15 Aria Adli (University of Cologne)

Computational Modeling in the Humanities: Reflections on Research and Education

Computational modeling is not only a manner of structuring, representing and meaningfully simplifying complex systems using the processing power of machines. It can also serve as a useful heuristic that offers a different approach to problem solving. Within the realm of the humanities, especially in disciplines in which deductive reasoning and formal logic have been influential, the latter invites epistemological reflection, because some approaches in computational modeling build on inductive modeling and stringent bottom-up systems. Drawing on co-teaching experience with Uwe Seifert, I want to report on the training of students of musicology and linguistics in agent-based modeling and show how it offers new perspectives for understanding established concepts such as the ongoing process of change in human language in society. I further show how the phenomenon of using different speech registers can be implemented in an agent-based model. I conclude by reflecting on what such an approach to speech registers could teach us about our understanding of taste in general.

15.15-15.45 Rie Asano (Max-Planck-Institute for Empirical Aesthetics; Teikyo University)

On the relationship between language and music: Revisiting the syntax of mind and the semantics of mind

The relationship between language and music has been studied from both theoretical and empirical perspectives in different research fields, such as linguistics, musicology, psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology. In this talk, I revisit the syntax of mind and the semantics of mind from a bottom-up comparative perspective on language and music. First, drawing on research on syntax in the broad sense, hierarchical processing, neural reuse, and evolutionary-developmental approaches, I argue that language and music are specialized uses of more basic neurocognitive operations. I then discuss the mind-mind problem—computational and phenomenological mind—and consider their implications for understanding musical meaning. Finally, I briefly explore the question of how meaningfulness emerges and outline a broad semantic perspective on meaning-making that adopts semiosis as a framework for comparative research on meaning in language and music. This approach offers new directions for integrating biological, cognitive, socio-affective, and socio-cultural perspectives on language and music.

16.15 -16.45 Uwe Seifert (University of Cologne)

Music-Readiness

The lecture consists of four parts. Part One addresses experiences gained during my studies in musicology and later conferences. These shaped my intellectual interest in fundamental questions, such as *Quid sit musica?*, about the subject of research and the epistemological and methodological foundations of musicology and the humanities. They ultimately led to the research subject “Music-Readiness.”

Part Two points out that Cognitive Musicology arose from this pursuit of knowledge and was introduced to musicology as basic research based on a computational framework for studying the musical mind/brain: Cognitive Musicology = Musicology + Cognitive Science + Neuroethology. Michael A. Arbib’s Schema Theory and Mirror System Hypothesis (MSH) were central in the development. These approaches are the most promising for advancing musicology as a science of the musical mind/brain and for the humanities in general. Schema Theory uses a top-down strategy to address the explanatory gap between mind and brain. The MSH provides a concise framework for investigating and explaining the biological and cultural evolution of the human mind/brain’s Language-Readiness, which can be adapted to research on the evolution of the musical mind/brain. Part Three then presents the working hypotheses on Music-Readiness to suit and complement the MSH. Central concepts include rhythm, its affective bases, and group behaviour or displays.

Part Four explores possible avenues for further study and expansion of Music-Readiness. These include incorporating a comparative analysis of music and dance with language and pantomime; the role of forms of vitality and mirror neurons as the motivational basis for the evolution of music understanding; a broader focus on the evolution of devices for needs and desires related to musical rhythm and rhythmic bodily behaviour; and a link back to Michael A. Arbib’s Schema Theory through social interaction.

16.45 – 17.30 Ian Cross (University of Cambridge)

Music, affiliative interaction and the person in law

The fact that music can constitute a form of affiliative interaction is now widely supported by evidence from anthropology and psychology; making music together has significant and reciprocal prosocial effects for participants. These reciprocal prosocial effects can be interpreted as corresponding to the emergence of a mutual sense of deontic commitment, which in turn can be understood as foundational in respect of the formation and maintenance of a society of laws. This paper will briefly explore some of the ways in which the idea of the persons in whom a sense of reciprocal deontic commitment may be elicited is somewhat dissonant with most western legal concepts of personhood, aligning better with those central to many non-western systems for managing the social order. It concludes by proposing that not only the idea of the person in jurisprudence, but also the societal importance of music as affiliative interaction, require significant re-evaluation.

17.45 – 18.30 Michael A. Arbib (University of Southern California)

From Music and Language to Architecture: Narrative, and the Space-Time of Action

In celebration of Uwe Seifert's 70th birthday and his lifelong interest in bringing together musicology, cognitive and computer science, and evolution, this talk will start by briefly assessing his contributions to two conferences, Music, language and the brain: A mysterious relationship, and How the brain got language: Towards a new roadmap. One concern will be with the linkage of action, perception, and emotion on three timescales: the timescale of the cultural evolution of language and music, the timescale of the composer, and the timescale of the performer.

Then, with a riff on the notion that "architecture is frozen music", the talk will turn from this grounding to the role of narrative, primarily in architecture. Whereas a musical score constrains the performance of the music as a sequence in time, the static form of a building can be experienced and used in diverse ways. To address this, the talk will confront Ricoeur's notions on "Architecture and narrativity" to offer a competing account rooted in the cognitive science concepts of schema, affordance, script, an atmosphere.

Finding the Music Hall (Musiksaal)

Updated Campus Information

- Address: Main Building, Albertus-Magnus-Platz 1, 50923 Köln

To reach the Music Hall, please follow these directions once you have entered the Main Building:

- Enter the Main Building through the main entrance.
- Head to the right-hand side of the entrance hall.
- Take the staircase on the right and proceed all the way to the top floor.

Access Notice

Please note that there is currently construction work on Albertus-Magnus-Platz.

- The area in front of the main building is restricted to a narrow pathway.
- The path running directly along the side of the main building remains open and easily accessible.

Restaurant Recommendations

Restaurant	***Opening Hours (Friday)***	***Address***
Com Pho	*12:00 PM – 10:00 AM*	*Zülpicher Str. 58D*
Krümel	*10:00 AM – 10:00 PM*	*Zülpicher Str. 207*
Petit Noir	*10:00 AM – 8:00 PM*	*Weyertal 42*
Al Baretto	*9:00 AM – 8:00 PM*	*Palanter Str. 3F*
Merlê	*8:00 AM – 6:00 PM*	*Dürener Str. 100*
Hanoi Vibe	*12:00 PM – 3:30 PM* *5:00 PM – 10:00 PM*	*Weyertal 47*
Bisù	*5:00 PM – 1:30 AM*	*Weyertal 41*

Notes:

- Our speakers will be dining at ***Café Krümel*** on Friday.
- *As opening hours and exact locations can occasionally change, we recommend a quick check online or via phone before visiting.*

MAP LEGEND
1. Petit Noir
2. Krümel
3. Hanoi Vibe
4. Bisù
5. Al Baretto
6. Merlê
7. Com Pho
8. Phil Café
X Musiksaal
RESTAURANTS