

Music

The historically significant areas of the music/language encounter and their interdisciplinary dialogue can be separated into four arenas: (1) considerations of music as a language and of linguistic models of music; (2) considerations of music in language and of language in music, that is, of the centrality of vocal sound to verbal significance and of sung, texted vocalization; (3) considerations of music about language, that is, of speech surrogates; and (4) considerations of language about music, that is, the intertwining of verbal and musical discourse. After sketching the research issues broadly associated with each these four arenas, we will suggest the importance of the most recent site of music/language dialogue, the voice.

Within Western academic histories, language and music share a heritage of formal, mathematical, and logical analysis. Considered as a semiotic system, music is, typically, syntactically far more redundant and overdetermined yet semantically far more diffuse and underdetermined than language. Nonetheless, there has been a long history of, and fascination with, the application of language models to musical analysis. Such application has been made by musical analogy to phonological and syntactic structures, analyzing both Western and non-Western musical (instrumental and vocal) forms. These models range from analogies between the distributional character of pitch systems and phonetic inventories, to analogies between syntactic structure and the harmonic, metrical, and motival organization of musical pieces.

Paralleling a broad trend in the human sciences, research that began in linguistic modeling has increasingly been developed, refined, and pursued within an integrated cognitive science approach linking psychology with music theory. Some cognitive approaches have been greeted by criticism of their cross-cultural limitations and of their seeming hostility to social agency.

At the same time, the cognitive psychology of music has undoubtedly contributed to our understanding of the ineffability of musical experience.

A more empirical orientation has focused on the common ground music and language share in poetics and performance. Here language and music meet in voice, phenomenologically intertwined as a play of sound and sense, i.e., the play of sensuality and the signifying properties of vocal sound. Language's musicality—its tonal, timbral, prosodic, and gradient dynamic qualities—highlights the role of vocal performance for linguistic meaning. Music's language—the texted dimensions of songs and other sung poetic genres—highlights verbal art as vocal art. It is in this interface—vocal performance and song texts—that linguistic and musical anthropology have historically found their most productive ethnographic dialogue.

Earlier work on music in language and language in music was more concerned with charting comparative continua, boundaries, and distinctions between speech and song. More recent work brings ethnographic sophistication to the description both to the interplay of verbal and vocal art, and to forms intermediate to speech and song (e.g., chant, recitative, intoned oratory), and genres that distinctively cross between them (e.g., verbal dueling, preaching, lamenting). Ethnographic attention to contextual and performative aspects of language has resulted in more sophisticated translations of poetic song texts, analyses of the coincident parallelism of textual and melodic stanzas, and approaches to interactions between tonal language and musical pitch contour.

Speech surrogates constitute another semiotic for musicking language, involving the transposition of linguistic tonal and temporal contours to surrogate articulatory modes and media. These can be vocal—for example, humming and whistling—or instrumental—for example, flutes or "talking drums." Surrogate systems are typically divided between those systems based on abridgement, where a limited number of phonemic elements is imitated by the surrogate, and those based on logographic or ideographic structure, where the surrogate sounds symbolize concepts without an intermediary connection to the phonemic structure of the base language. Speech surrogates participate in a wide variety of communicative practices, ranging across signal and aesthetic functions, referential to ambiguous messages, and stereotypic phrases to dialogic production of novel utterances.

The foundations of music as a mental construct and a performative practice obscure one of its most significant social facts—namely, that music is a ubiquitous topic for discourse. Musicians and listeners everywhere spend much productive social energy talking about music, and from that simple observation three important domains for social analysis have unfolded. First, stimulated by work in lexical semantics, research has developed on the relations between musical terminology, ethnotheories of music, and the metaphoric basis of language about music. Second, stimulated by work on dialogism, researchers have studied the intertwining of speaking and musicking as a site of social interaction among musicians. Finally, engaging debates originating in the philosophy of musical aesthetics, research linking language and music has investigated the social location of evaluative, critical, and interpretive musical discourse.

Voice is the embodied locus of spoken and sung performance, the site where language and music have received closest ethnographic scrutiny. But voice has a more familiar articulation in contemporary anthropology, having also become a metaphor for difference, a key representational trope for identity, power, conflict, social position, and agency. The connection between these empirical and metaphorical invocations of voice indexes a broader anthropological project, one that means to link embodied expression with social agency. This connection explores how vocality is a social practice that is locally understood as a conventional index of authority, evidence, and experiential truth. As such, voice and vocality is a particularly significant site for the articulation of opposition and difference. This is no doubt why phrases like "giving voice," "taking voice," "having voice" are so linked to the politics of identity, to the ability of the subaltern to speak, to the ability of indigeneity movements to "talk back" and class, gender, and race politics to "back talk" the dominant. Linking the histories of *vox populi* to "lift every voice and sing," vocality has become the site where linguistic and musical anthropology most strikingly conjoin a poetics and politics of culture.

In conclusion, music and language are fundamentally interrelated domains of expressive culture and human behavior and experience. Although music and language have been treated as distinct objects of inquiry within specific disciplines, their relationship has periodically been an object of focused attention within dialogues between linguistics, anthropology, ethnomusicology, music theory, philosophy, and cognitive science. In the past, such work has often focused on formal musical "grammars," on semiotic differences between musical and linguistic modes of signification, and on the intertwining of musical and linguistic expression in musical speech surrogates, paralinguistic and non-segmental dimensions of language, and in texted song. More recently, ethnographic and theoretical interest has focused on evaluative and theoretical verbal discourses about music and musical meaning, and on a metaphorical and empirical interest in the voice as the embodied site of both musical and linguistic expressivity, and of social distinction. Ethnographic description of the micro-politics of emplaced, embodied, and voiced identity in particular local lifeworlds has developed across linguistic and musical anthropology in recent years. This signals renewed attention to the materiality and social intimacy of vocality, and its significance for understanding how social identities are indexed and expressed in musical and verbal practices.

(See also *body, expert, identity, meter, performativity, poetry, power, truth, voice*)

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