

Keynote Talk 2

MIR redux: Knowledge and real-world challenges, and new interdisciplinary futures

Georgina Born

University of Oxford

Abstract

How can MIR refresh itself and its endeavors, scholarly and real world? I speak as an outsider, and it is foolhardy to advise scientist colleagues whose methodologies one would be hard pressed to follow! Nonetheless, my question points in two directions: first, to two areas of auto-critique that have emerged within the MIR community – to do with the status of the knowledge produced, and ethical and social concerns. One theme that unites them is interdisciplinarity: how MIR would gain from closer dialogues with musicology, ethnomusicology, music sociology, and science and technology studies in music. Second, the ‘refresh’ might address MIR’s pursuit of scientific research oriented to technological innovation, itself invariably tied to the drive for economic growth. The burgeoning criticisms of the FAANG corporations and attendant concerns about sustainable economies remind us of the urgent need for other values to guide science and engineering. We might ask: what would computational genre recognition or music recommendation look like if, under public-cultural or non-profit imperatives, the incentives driving them aimed to optimise imaginative and cultural self- and/or group development, adhering not to a logic of ‘similarity’ but diversity, or explored the socio-musical potentials of music discovery, linked to goals of human flourishing (Nussbaum 2003, Hesmondhalgh 2013)? The time is ripe for intensive and sustained interdisciplinary engagements in ways previously unseen. My keynote ends by inviting action: a think tank to take this forward.

Biography

Georgina Born OBE FBA is Professor of Music and Anthropology at the University of Oxford, was the bass player with Henry Cow in the late 70s, played improvised cello in the 80s, wrote an ethnography of IRCAM in the 90s and an ethnography of the BBC in the 2000s, and is a leading interdisciplinary scholar writing on the mediation of music, especially its social forms. She ran an ERC-funded research group (2010-15) studying ethnographically how digitization and the internet have affected music worldwide.