

WiMIR Keynote Talk

Performance Matters

Beyond the Current Conception of Musical Performance in MIR

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Abstract

This talk will reflect on what we can observe about musical performance in the audio signal and where MIR techniques have succeeded and failed in enhancing our understanding of musical performance. Since its foundation, ISMIR has showcased a range of approaches for studying musical performance. Some of these have been explicit approaches for studying expressive performance while others implicitly analyze performance with other aspects of the musical audio. Building on my own work developing tools for analyzing musical performance, I will consider not only the assumptions that underlie the questions we ask about performance but what we learn and what we miss in our current approaches to summarizing performance-related information from audio signals. I will also reflect on a number of related questions, including what do we gain by summarizing over large corpora versus close reading of a select number of recordings. What do we lose? What can we learn from generative techniques, such as those applied in style transfer? And finally, how can we integrate these disparate approaches in order to better understand the role of performance in our conception of musical style?

Biography

Johanna Devaney is an Assistant Professor at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. At Brooklyn College she teaches primarily in the Music Technology and Sonic Arts areas and at the Graduate Center she is appointed to the Music and the Data Analysis and Visualization programs. Previously, she was an Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Cognition at Ohio State University and a postdoctoral scholar at the Center for New Music and Audio Technologies (CNMAT) at the University of California at Berkeley. Johanna completed her PhD in music technology at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. She also holds an MPhil degree in music theory from Columbia University and an MA in composition from York University in Toronto.

Johanna's research focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to the study of musical performance. Primarily, she examines the ways in which recorded performances can be used to study performance practice and develops computational tools to facilitate this. Her work draws on the disciplines of music, computer science, and psychology, and has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Google Faculty Research Awards program and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Digital Humanities program.