

**THE RIGOR OF ACADEMIC PUBLISHING AND
COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM
THE EDITOR OF *MUSIC THEORY SPECTRUM* AND
*CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW****

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**СТРОГОСТ АКАДЕМСКОГ ИЗДАВАШТВА И
КОЛАБОРАТИВНИ ПРОЈЕКТИ: ПЕРСПЕКТИВА УРЕДНИКА
ЧАСОПИСА *MUSIC THEORY SPECTRUM* И
*CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW***

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ABSTRACT

Music Theory Spectrum, featuring rigorous and critical studies on a wide range of topics in music theory and analysis, is a flagship journal of the Society for Music Theory. *Contemporary Music Review* is one of the leading publications that focuses on the critical study and discussion of contemporary music from around the globe and diverse methodologies and approaches. In this reflective essay, I present an autoethnographic assessment of the rigor of academic publishing from the perspective of Editor-in-Chief of *Music Theory Spectrum* and the challenges and fruitions of collaborative projects through the lens of Editor of *Contemporary Music Review*, the positions I currently hold.

· I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and Biljana Milanović, Editor-in-Chief, for their comments and insights, which ultimately strengthened this study.

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KEYWORDS: *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Contemporary Music Review*, international collaborations, academic publishing, peer review in academic publishing.

АПСТРАКТ

Music Theory Spectrum, у којем се објављују строге и критички усмерене студије из широког спектра тема у области музичке теорије и анализе, представља водећи часопис Друштва за музичку теорију. *Contemporary Music Review* једна је од водећих публикација усмерених на критичко проучавање и разматрање савремене музике у глобалном контексту, уз ослањање на разноврсне методолошке приступе. У овом рефлексивном чланку излажем аутоетнографску процену ригорозности академског издаваштва из перспективе главног уредника часописа *Music Theory Spectrum*, као и изазове и резултате колаборативних пројеката, сагледане кроз призму уредника часописа *Contemporary Music Review* – позиција које тренутно обављам.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Contemporary Music Review*, међународна сарадња, академско издаваштво, рецензентски поступак у академском издаваштву.

INTRODUCTION

Music Theory Spectrum (MTS) is an official journal of the Society for Music Theory (SMT) and a flagship journal for the field.¹ It features rigorous and critical studies on a wide range of topics in music theory and analysis, including interdisciplinary articles that explore intersections between music theory and topics in fields such as ethnomusicology, historical musicology, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and performance. Being asked to serve in any capacity is quite an honor and a privilege, reserved for scholars with a dynamic research profile, prolific publication record, and a high standard for scholarly excellence. After having served as Associate Editor for four years, I was appointed Editor-in-Chief of MTS in 2023, a significant and powerful endorsement by the SMT and a mark of distinction within the field of music theory that reflects recognition of one's expertise, reputation, and leadership skills. With this appointment, SMT has entrusted me with a profound opportunity to shape the direction of

¹ From its inception through 1996, MTS was published by SMT, then by the University of California Press (1997 through 2013), and since 2014 by Oxford University Press.

the field by selecting and promoting high-impact critical research. Only fifteen theorists have served the society in this capacity before me, so I exercise my power judiciously, justly, and equitably.

My captivation for archival research and enjoyment of collaborative projects led me to propose two edited volumes for *Contemporary Music Review* (CMR) – a journal that specializes in themed issues on a wide range of topics concerning contemporary music. The two issues I guest edited (on the optic of archival studies from the Paul Sacher Stiftung) included some of the leading voices in the field and resulted in critically recognized projects.² In 2021, I was invited to join the CMR Editorial Team. In that capacity, I supervise the publication of issues by guest editors or propose my own projects. I have proposed and spearheaded six themed issues for CMR, including two edited volumes on Serbian music in collaboration with colleagues from Serbia, among others.

In this reflective essay, I present an autoethnographic assessment of the rigor of academic publishing from the perspective of Editor-in-Chief of *Music Theory Spectrum* and the challenges and fruitions of collaborative projects through the lens of Editor of *Contemporary Music Review*, the positions I currently hold.

MUSIC THEORY SPECTRUM

The Society for Music Theory was founded in 1977 at the Second National Conference on Music Theory in Evanston, Illinois, on 19 November 1977.³ At the succeeding meeting (the First Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory), held on 20 October 1978 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Allen Forte, the president of SMT, announced the formation of the Society's journal: *Music Theory Spectrum*. The first issue of MTS, with Bryan Simms as Editor, was published on 1 March 1979. In a note, "From the President of the Society," Forte speaks of the formation of the journal as "no less remarkable and auspicious than is the founding of the society itself" and describes MTS as "the official scholarly organ" (1979, 1).

Approximately thirty articles had been considered, and nine were published in the first issue of MTS.⁴ In his note, Forte proudly spoke of the diversity of the field of music theory, and that it is for this reason that the journal of

² Both issues (Vol. 36, Issue 5 and Vol. 38, Issues 3–4) were nominated for SMT publication awards, and the former was selected as a finalist.

³ For more on the history of the formation of the society, see SMT, n.d.

⁴ See SMT 1979. In addition to nine articles, the issue also featured essays on the inception of the SMT by Browne Richmond (1979) and on the founding of MTS by Bryan R. Simms (1979).

the society bears the name *Music Theory Spectrum* – it is intended “not only to accommodate but also to encourage the fruitful exchange of ideas over a broad expanse of intellectual activities within the field” (1979, 1). The nine essays featured in the inaugural issue cover the topics of set theory and motivic analysis of atonal music, the study of fugue, formal analysis, tonal structures, musical time, music treatises of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and analysis of fifteenth-century music (through the Platonic-Pythagorean system).⁵ These topics reflected the traditional music theory curriculum of the time, and they were a staple of *MTS* until the 2000s.

From today’s perspective, the first rendition of *MTS* was anything but diverse. In fact, set theory, Schenkerian analysis, and formal analysis of Western music would remain the staples of articles published in *MTS* for decades to follow. Not until Philip Ewell’s notable plenary talk “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame” at the 2019 SMT Annual Meeting in Columbus, Ohio, subsequently published in *Music Theory Online*, did the society undergo a seismic shift (see Ewell 2020). While SMT has been working on promoting diversity and equity by establishing numerous committees, programs, and incentives, such as the formation of the Committee on the Status of Women in 1988 and the Committee on Diversity in 1995, the progress has been steady but slow.⁶ The first SMT demographic reports of 2011 reveal that 28% of the society’s membership were women (a significant increase from the decades before), less than 1% African Americans, and around 10% people of color. The latest (2024) report reveals a slight increase to 31.3% of women, 1.1% of Black members, and around 11.5% people of color (see the SMT Demographic Reports n.d.). However, in 2019, Ewell dared to examine and confront the society and the field of music theory from the perspective of critical race theory, positing that a structural and institutionalized “white racial frame” exists in the field, in terms of who practices music theory and whose music and theoretical works are being privileged.⁷ Today, a move toward more diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices can be seen across society and the field. Some of the indicators of these new practices are the inclusion of more diverse repertoire

⁵ See *Music Theory Spectrum* 1979.

⁶ The Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) is currently called the Committee on Feminist Issues and Gender Equity (Committee on Feminist Issues n.d.) and the Diversity Committee now operates as the Committee on Race and Ethnicity (Committee on Race n.d.). I had the privilege of being appointed a member of the CSW in 2020 for two years, during which, among other tasks, I ran a mentoring program, pairing young women scholars (graduate students and early career professors) with senior scholars in the field to work on producing strong conference proposals and papers leading toward publication.

⁷ Ewell borrows the term “white racial frame” from sociologist Joe Feagin ([2009] 2013).

in music theory textbooks, SMT-led pedagogy and professional workshops, the founding of new SMT committees and interest groups, and the formation of numerous SMT grants and awards that reward diversity, equity, and inclusion in research and pedagogy.⁸

While the notion of who is a music theorist in terms of gender and ethnic demographics has shown modest progress, the question of what music theory is, in terms of methodologies and types of music being analyzed, has been changing and evolving more rapidly, especially in the last two decades. As the first journal of the SMT,⁹ *MTS* can serve as an indicator of how much the field has changed over the decades. The aims and scopes of *MTS* already point to the diversity that the founding members could not have envisioned half a century ago: “*Music Theory Spectrum* features rigorous and critical studies on a wide range of topics in music theory and analysis. The journal welcomes and publishes interdisciplinary articles that explore intersections between music theory and topics in the fields, such as ethnomusicology, historical musicology, mathematics, philosophy, psychology, and performance” (*Music Theory Spectrum* n.d.). When theorists seceded from the American Musicological Society (AMS), SMT originally defined itself in distinction from musicology (and ethnomusicology). From that perspective, the current scope of *MTS* seems to defy the society’s original identity. However, the journal’s scope accurately reflects the state of music theory today. Perhaps, one need not look further than the society’s list of nearly thirty active and dynamic interest groups that include analysis of world music, composition, dance and movement, film and multimedia, global interculturalism, improvisation, jazz, ludomusicology, musical theater, popular music, and performance and analysis, among others.¹⁰

Browsing through the most recent issues of *MTS*, one will find that while some of the traditional topics, such as formal analysis (and more specifically, sonata form) have grown, studies with diverse analytical approaches and on a wide range of genres and types of music have substantially expanded. Two most recent volumes feature articles on antifocal anaphoras in hip hop vocals, gesture and timbre in Fujikura Dai’s music for solo shamisen, the application of George Russell’s Lydian Concept of Tonal Organization, analysis of Cantonese

⁸ For more on the committees, events, and resources, see the SMT website (SMT News n.d.); for information of SMT grants and awards, see SMT Grants n.d.; and for the list of interest groups, see SMT Interest n.d.

⁹ SMT added three other peer-reviewed publications over the years: *Music Theory Online* (n.d.), launched experimentally in 1993 and officially in 1995 (see Piilonen [2025] on the history of *MTO*); SMT-V: The Society for Music Theory Videocast (SMT-V n.d.), founded in 2014; and SMT-Pod: The Society for Music Theory Podcast (SMT-Pod n.d.), launched in 2022.

¹⁰ See SMT Interest n.d.

naamyam in the works by Jon Jang, the rhyme scheme as music-setting in the Great American Songbook, queer theory and the analysis of music by trans indigenous Mexican-American composer Mari Esabel Valverde, narrative and tonal structure in Bernard Herrmann's score of *Vertigo* (d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), examining the connection between improvisation and society, contour and transformational theory in the analysis of Yao Chen's Kunqu opera, theoretical analysis of *maqām humāyūn* in Persian art music, and schemas in jazz music, among many others (*Music Theory Spectrum* 2024a; 2024b; 2025a). The advances of technology allow *MTS* to publish articles that incorporate multimedia, making it a more attractive outlet for scholars working on popular music, film music, or dance and movement analysis, among other topics. For instance, the newest articles include alternate guitar tunings in Joni Mitchell's songs, "horror music" in video games, and non-isochronous rhythm in Colombian *Cantos de Boga* with audio and video examples. Even within "traditional" subjects, such as form and analysis, we see novel methodologies that reflect the work of the SMT's interest groups and initiatives. For instance, Anabel Maler's article analyzes how sign language analyzes musical form, thus reframing sign language as music analysis.¹¹ In comparison, even twenty years ago, *MTS* featured nearly exclusively studies of Western music, with topics in Schenkerian analysis, set theory, tonal function, and formal analysis dominating the field. Not until 2006 do we see articles on popular and non-Western music begin to make inroads into the field's flagship journal. Putting it mildly, the *Music Theory Spectrum* of today is not the *Music Theory Spectrum* of 1979 (or even from a decade ago).

The Editor-in-Chief of *MTS* is trusted by the SMT to determine the journal's mission, scope, and overall editorial direction. While the journal does not typically solicit essays or publish themed issues, in my capacity as Editor, I decided to dedicate my first issue (Volume 47, Issue 1 [2025]) to the topic of public music theory (PMT) – public-facing scholarship that looks behind the walls of the academy. At the 2023 SMT Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, five plenary speakers – Harald Krebs, Cory Arnold, Lydia Bangura, Alyssa Barna, and J. Daniel Jenkins, moderated by Stephen Rodgers – called attention to public music theory in its many varied forms and definitions. In addition to the five plenary talks and an introduction by Rodgers, we solicited eleven essays that offer insight into public music theory – how it is practiced in popular media, social media, podcasts, video game livestreams, films and cartoons,

¹¹ *Music Theory Spectrum*, Volume 48, Issue 1 (2026), Volume 48, Issue 2 (2026), and Volume 49, Issue 1 (2027). Currently, these articles appear under advance articles (*Music Theory Spectrum* 2025b).

retirement homes, in political protest, correctional institutions, and non-academic periodicals, among many other forms and platforms.¹² As Editor of *MTS*, I took a bold stance in dedicating an entire issue of the society's flagship journal to a type of scholarship that has often been unrecognized, uncredited, and undervalued by academia, thus bringing the multifaceted PMT to the forefront of discussion in the society's leading journal. As the Editorial Team states in their note, the intent of this special issue was to "provide ample material for contemplation and inspiration, and that it may help foster a mutually beneficial discourse in music theory – however and wherever it is practiced" (Editorial 2025, 2).¹³

The Rigor and Standards of the Peer-Review Process

Since the foundation of SMT, *Music Theory Spectrum* has remained a leading journal in the field of music theory. The Editor of *MTS* is entrusted with maintaining the highest level of rigor and excellence of critical inquiry in the field. One of the most critical aspects of preserving such a high standard of scholarship is the rigorous peer-review process. A typical acceptance rate of original submissions is between 0–5%. According to the most recent *MTS* Annual Report (2024–2025),¹⁴ the acceptance rate was 1.8% (two out of 111 original submissions). *MTS* policy strictly adheres to the principle of double-blind review, put in place to ensure utmost objectivity and equitable treatment of all authors and reviewers. Both authors and reviewers follow the policy with the highest level of integrity. While the *MTS* submission portal flags the most obvious instance of a conflict of interest – an author and a reviewer may not be employed by the same institution – we rely on authors and reviewers to indicate when any other conflict of interest arises. Thus, during their submission, the authors will list those scholars with whom they have worked closely. Similarly, reviewers will decline our invitation to review an essay if they are familiar with the author's identity, have served as their mentor, or have read or heard an earlier version of that study. If authors reveal their identity (implicitly or explicitly) at any point during the process, the reviewers will alert us, and their submission may be disqualified or the process will start anew with a new set of reviewers following a complete de-anonymization of their study.

¹² See *Music Theory Spectrum* 2025b.

¹³ The Editorial Team comprised Emmerly (as Editor) and her three Associate Editors: Michael Callahan, Benjamin Levy, and Victoria Malawey.

¹⁴ This thorough annual report, prepared by the *MTS* Editor, is provided for the SMT Executive Board, SMT Publications Committee, and the *MTS* Editorial Board. It summarizes the journal's annual activity during one fiscal year.

For an article to be accepted for publication in *MTS*, both reviewers must recommend “accept,” which, as noted above, is quite rare. However, even an immediate acceptance assumes a *conditional* acceptance – typically, positive reviews will offer a thorough report (two or more single-spaced pages per reviewer) with numerous suggestions for strengthening the article. It is very unusual for an author not to follow through or to disagree with reviewers’ suggestions. (This occasionally happens when, in their lengthy reports, the two reviewers may differ on an issue, and the author needs to choose one angle.) As the saying goes, “The reviewer is always right,” which insinuates that the reviewers’ objective, critical feedback consistently improves a manuscript. Being called to review an article for *MTS* is an honor and a privilege – it indicates that a reviewer has demonstrated a particularly high level of standard of scholarship in their area of expertise, critical thought, and objectivity – and they approach this crucial service to the field with utmost professionalism and integrity. Two votes of “decline” result in a definite rejection of a submission for publication (and that article, even in another form, may not be resubmitted for consideration for publication in *MTS* again). Any mix of recommendations allows the author to “revise and resubmit” (R&R) their article. Since *MTS* follows a policy of allowing only one round of revisions, authors take great care in implementing (and responding to) reviewers’ comments. (A single report recommending “R&R” may be ten or more single-spaced pages in length, and authors are also required to respond to each comment, line-by-line.) In order for a revised article to be accepted, both reviewers must recommend “accept.” If the two reviewers are still divided following the resubmission, the manuscript is sent to a third reader to break the tie. A tiebreaker is tasked with reading both the original and revised versions of the manuscript and all readers’ reports before making an objective decision. The *MTS* Annual Report for 2024–2025 indicates that 26% of revised articles have been accepted for publication.

While the Editor-in-Chief of *MTS* sets the journal’s (and field’s) editorial directions, manages a team of ten editors (four associate, four assistant, a reviews editor, and a managerial editor), oversees the peer-review process, and makes final decisions on manuscripts to ensure high academic quality and ethical standards, it takes a team to maintain the journal’s flagship status. The editor relies on peer reviewers to answer when called to provide a thorough, objective, and critical reading of the content in their area of expertise and on the editorial team to help ensure the rigor, clarity, and strength of arguments in each article through thorough editing.¹⁵

¹⁵ In addition to these tasks, Editor of *MTS* also oversees the preparation of all music examples and illustrations by the *MTS* engraver, works closely with the journal’s publisher, Oxford

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There are many challenges in upholding such scholarly rigor and high standards. Reviewing articles is a heavy service, but also an unpaid service; as editors, *MTS* editors must be respectful of our colleagues' unavailability. It is not uncommon to have to reach out to a dozen scholars before the editorial team can secure two expert reviewers who are not directly involved with the author or familiar with their work. This is particularly a challenge when the journal receives a submission on a niche topic. In these cases, the Editor reaches out to members of the journal's Editorial Board, who, as part of their role, accept the call.¹⁶ Occasionally, the editors will reach out to scholars across music studies and continents (if language is not a barrier to providing a critical and detailed review).¹⁷ Further, we expect reports that are detailed and constructive in criticism. If they lack rigor and substance that will ultimately strengthen the essay, such reports will not be considered, and those reviewers will not be solicited again (especially if they delay the review process). Reviewers are expected to adhere to the SMT Code of Conduct, which focuses on a safe and respectful environment that encourages free inquiry for all and zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment. Reviewers who do not abide by this policy are not solicited again, and their reports are discounted.

Before I was appointed as Editor of *MTS*, I recalled one of my mentors (and a former editor of *MTS*) telling me, "Great articles don't write themselves," a sentiment I truly understood only after I began my service as editor. Every article published in *MTS* has typically gone through rigorous peer review twice, multiple revisions, meticulous copyediting by three editors (and the music engraver), and several rounds of proofreading by the author and three editors.

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW

Contemporary Music Review is an interdisciplinary forum for research in and about music now. Since its founding in 1984 by a British composer Nigel Osborne, the editors aim to publish "ambitious, critical, and rigorous work on the culture, history, psychology, sociology, politics, and aesthetics of

University Press (OUP), and the production company that typesets the articles. Editor also regularly communicates with and reports to the SMT Executive Board, SMT Publications Committee, and the *MTS* Editorial Board. Editor also participates in regular meetings with OUP and its editorial team, and annual meetings with the *MTS* Editorial Board and SMT Publications Committee and prepares detailed annual reports.

¹⁶ *MTS* has sixteen to eighteen Editorial Board members (selected by the Editor and SMT President), whose areas of expertise cover the many diverse subfields of music theory.

¹⁷ While not all, most of the solicited reviewers are from the US, Canada, and the UK.

contemporary music wherever it occurs and however it may be identified when it is occurring” (*Contemporary Music Review* n.d.).¹⁸ The journal also seeks to “cultivate reflection on musical and musicological responses toward ‘the contemporary’ as a multiple and shifting cultural, ecological, epistemic, historical, sociological and technological condition.” To accomplish these aims and scopes, the editors of *CMR* invite themed issues that both: “contest the globality/locality of and propose alternatives to generic concepts of contemporary music such as ‘Western Art Music since 1945’” and “explore alternative contemporaries in different technological, social, geohistorical, environmental, cultural, biological and aesthetic landscapes” (*Contemporary Music Review* n.d.).

CMR only features themed issues that are spearheaded by the journal’s editors or guest editors, and featured articles illustrate a broad spectrum of global contemporary music research, including analytical, cultural, environmental, historical, scientific, social, and technological approaches, as well as reports, bibliographic studies, interviews, scores, and translations.¹⁹

Archival Research Editions

Prior to joining the *CMR* editorial team in 2019, I guest-edited two issues that featured illuminating articles on archival and sketch study of the material housed at the Paul Sacher, where I have spent over a decade conducting my research on Elliott Carter and Jonathan Harvey. The first one, *Studies from the Paul Sacher Stiftung*, highlighted several collections at the PSS in five studies: Pierre Boulez (in an article by Joseph Salem), Luciano Berio, Boulez, Mauricio Kagel, György Ligeti, and Henri Pousser, supplemented by the materials from the Gottfried Michael and Karlheinz Stockhausen archives (in a study by Jennifer Iverson), Elliott Carter (Emmery), Steve Reich (Keith Potter), and Luigi Dallapiccola and Massimo Milla (Angela Ida De Benedictis and Christoph Neidhöfer).²⁰ This issue was selected as a finalist (among 117 submissions) for the SMT Citation of Special Merit Publication Award in 2020 and nominated for an award by the American Musicological Society (AMS). My second guest-edited issue, *Further Studies from the Paul Sacher Stiftung*, which was also recognized for its strength with award nominations by both theoretical (SMT) and musicological (AMS) societies, added new collections to the inquiry by several other leading scholars in the field. It contained illuminating studies on the collections

¹⁸ *CMR* was initially published by Gordon & Breach, which later became part of Routledge, one imprint of the journal’s current publisher, Taylor & Francis.

¹⁹ In addition to myself, other current editors of *CMR* are Antares Boyle, Sabine Feisst, Anthony Gritten, and Björn Heile.

²⁰ See *Contemporary Music Review* 2017.

of Morton Feldman (Ryan Dohoney), Reich (John Pymm), Edgard Varèse (Federica Di Gasbarro), Carter (Emmery), Ligeti (Amy Bauer), Béla Bartók (Carl Leafstedt), Kaija Saariaho (Joy H. Calico), and Berio (Thomas Peattie).²¹

As Co-Chair of the SMT Autographs and Archival Documents Interest Group (2018–2020),²² I decided to expand my collaborative projects to reach a wider umbrella of studies that are informed by archival research. In 2021, I invited my colleague Benjamin Levy to join me in preparing a special issue (colloquy) for *Music Theory Online* on the theme of “Archival Research in Music: New Materials, Methods, and Arguments,” which featured cutting-edge studies that showcase new perspectives and methodologies for archival research, demonstrating the dramatic transformation in recent years and wide breadth of the field.²³ As we note in our introduction, “Far from a rigid and antiqued discipline, exclusively immersed in dusty manuscripts of canonic composers, aiming to reveal their authorial intent or craft a definitive edition of their works, recent archival scholarship has substantially broadened in its materials, methods, and in the kinds of scholarly arguments these new resources make possible” (Levy and Emmery 2021 [1]). Many of the articles in both of my *CMR* volumes and the *Music Theory Online* colloquy do not confine themselves to composers’ sketches, but rather acknowledge the importance of the interrelated network of ideas surrounding and helping shape the creative process. The studies in these volumes illustrate how the creative process has transformed, and how our notion of what an archive is has been affected by contemporary developments in technologies in our globalized and interconnected world ([2]).

²¹ See *Contemporary Music Review* 2019.

²² This Interest Group was inaugurated at the 2016 SMT Annual Meeting (in Vancouver, British Columbia) by Patricia Hall, who served as the group’s first Chair (2016–2018). I was elected to serve as co-Chair with Áine Heneghan (2018–2020).

²³ See *Music Theory Online* 2021. This colloquy included articles on Michael Finnissy (by Richard Beaudoin), examining the photographic effect of overexposure as analogous to Finnissy’s technique of selective musical borrowing; John Cage (Jeffrey Perry), who examines Cage’s reading of Erik Satie and Henry David Thoreau; Bruce Goff (Levy), in which the author examines the connection between music and architecture; *Hardijs Lediņš* (Kevin C. Karnes), which traces the forgotten history of the 1980s Soviet disco craze by following the work of one of its pioneering figures, the Latvian DJ, musician, and performance artist; manuscripts from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum (Patricia Hall), which reveal harrowing circumstances these prisoners faced, the creative adaptability of their arrangements for the musicians on hand, and the heart-rending irony in the titles they selected; Saariaho (Landon Morrison), which sheds light on the composer’s three early electronic works created at IRCAM; and Jonathan Harvey (Emmery), which provides a reading of the composer’s String Quartet No. 2 (1988) through the lens of gender theory, musical gesture, and embodiment. This issue was also nominated for an SMT award and an article from the collection (Morrison 2021) was the winner of the SMT Emerging Scholar Award in 2022.

ISSUES ON EASTERN EUROPEAN MUSIC

In 2018, I also began my archival and field research for my book project on Yugoslav avant-garde music. I was drawn to this topic for three primary reasons. The first is my personal connection to the country, as I lived in Belgrade, then Yugoslavia, for seven years in the 1980s and was familiar with the region and fluent in the language. Second, as I discovered, avant-garde music in Yugoslavia was unique and fascinating, deserving of a thorough inquiry. Third, it was my realization (and bafflement) that almost nothing about this fascinating music scene was known outside the region of the former Yugoslavia.

The reasons for the lack of scholarship on this music were immediately evident as they are rooted in the asymmetry of power and unequal chances of representation between scholars from such European “peripheries” and the leading centers of the (domineering) Anglo-American scholarship. The local community of musicologists in Serbia is rather small, and their access to leading global publishing houses is obstructed by the lack of institutional financial support or organizational powers. Access to current scholarship alone is a challenge on its own. As libraries are not adequately financially supported, scholars often do not have sufficient institutional access to the newest scholarship.²⁴ They have to pay for inter-library loans on their own (granted the material is available for a loan at all), and often resort to having to cover the exorbitant costs for accessing articles online or buying books on their own.²⁵ Lastly, the language barrier is another major hindrance. Peer reviewers will refuse to read (and seldom approve for publication) an article that is not absolutely polished; an occasional spelling or typographical error may be overlooked, but an article not written in “perfect” academic English and idiomatic style is automatically rejected. On the one hand, the way the system is set up is logical: articles accepted

²⁴ During my research trip in Belgrade in 2019, I was preparing a conference presentation and was not able to find almost any of the material I needed at any of the leading libraries in the city: the National Library of Serbia, the University Library “Svetozar Marković” (the main library in the University of Belgrade system), the Faculty of Music Library (the most prominent higher education institution for the study of music in the country), and the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. In order to finish my paper, I went to Basel, Switzerland, just to gain access to the books and articles I needed. It was a shocking and upsetting revelation that access to scholarship, a notion we take for granted at leading research universities in the US, was a luxury to researchers elsewhere.

²⁵ As per most recent data presented by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the average monthly salary in Serbia in September 2025 was 109147.00 RSD (equivalent to about \$1,100). The notion of spending over \$100 on one book is neither realistic nor sustainable for most scholars in Serbia.

for publication display the highest levels of scholarly rigor, academic standard, and engagement with the newest scholarship in the field. On the other hand, this very system perpetuates the dominance of Anglo-American scholarship in music theory and musicology and consequently determines the production of knowledge about global music and decides who can participate in making that knowledge. This dilemma takes us back to Ewell's initial questions: Who gets to be a practitioner of music theory, and who are the composers whose music is privileged in scholarly studies?

Thus, to “decolonize” music studies and include scholars outside the Anglo-American sphere, the system puts the onus on the editor to realize any such project, a task that is incredibly laborious for anyone who performs this unpaid service to their professional society for some greater good, on top of their academic positions and their own research projects.²⁶ Because top research universities in the US expect a robust, active, and continuous research profile of their faculty, many scholars cannot afford to work on projects that take time and focus away from their own research.²⁷ Understanding the challenges of equity and diversity in music theory (and music studies, in general) and the specific obstacles faced by colleagues I met in Belgrade during my research trips, I decided to take the lead on five (thus far) collaborative edited volumes that would aim to decenter musicological discourse on Eastern Europe, foster new communities of scholars that bridge geographies, research cultures, and academic worlds. As Editor of *Contemporary Music Review*, a journal with this mission in mind (in a broader sense), and my fluency in Serbo-Croatian, the lingua franca of Yugoslavia, I was in a unique position to achieve these goals. The first collaborative project (*Serbian Musical Avant-Gardes*) was smaller in scale and emerged through my work and friendships with colleagues from Belgrade. Subsequent projects progressively expanded the scope to encompass the former Yugoslav frameworks (*Serbian Musical Identity*), Eastern European (*Minimalism in Eastern Europe*), European regions that are in political and geographic flux (*Resounding Europe*, currently in progress), and a large-scale project that reaches and bridges communities of scholars globally (Kronos Quartet at 50, currently in production).

My work in Belgrade initially served as an impetus for a series of collaborative projects with Serbian scholars. Following my participation at the “Music

²⁶ In top research institutions like Emory University, only published scholarship of (singly-authored) monographs by leading university presses and peer-reviewed articles in top-tier journals counts toward tenure and promotion.

²⁷ In my experience collaborating with scholars from Serbia and other Eastern European countries, it took an average of fifty hours per article just to prepare it for rigorous peer review; these were hours invested before the time-demanding copyediting and proofreading.

and Spatiality: 13th Biennial International Conference on Music Theory and Analysis,” hosted by the Department of Music Theory at the Faculty of Music of the University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia, 4–6 October 2019, soon after, I organized a panel on Serbian music to be presented at the Tenth European Music Analysis Conference EuroMAC.²⁸ The session titled “20th/21st-century Serbian Modernism and Avant-Garde: Intersections of History, Theory, Analysis, and Performance” (chaired by Emmery), featured seven panelists: Nikola Komatović, Srđan Teparić, Marija Masnikosa and Ivana Miladinović Prica in a joint presentation, Ivana Ilić, Ivana Medić, and Emmery (see EuroMAC 2021). Around the same time, I also participated in a conference, “Music and Art in the Shaping of European Identity,” hosted by the Department of Musicology at the Faculty of Music.²⁹ My participation at all three events with colleagues from Serbia served as a springboard for future collaborations.

Spurred by the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the collective outrage over social injustice brought to the forefront during this period, scholars sought new ways to connect during the lockdowns and engage in meaningful and inclusive scholarship. Inspired by the exciting Yugoslav avant-garde music I was discovering during my research in Serbia before the pandemic (but, as I mentioned, also dismayed by how unknown this music scene was outside the boundaries of Serbia and former Yugoslavia), I decided to propose an edited volume on Serbian Musical Avant-Gardes for *Contemporary Music Review*. As one of the leading journals in music studies, with a large international readership (with over 100,000 annual views and downloads), *CMR* was well-suited to introduce Serbian music and scholars to its wide (international) readership.

Published in 2021, this issue constituted the first study in the English language on the topic of Serbian avant-garde music. It featured articles by the seven panelists at the EuroMAC I organized the previous year, with the addition of Melita Milin (from the Institute of Musicology at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts [SASA]), and Dragana Stojanović-Novičić and Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (affiliated with the Department of Musicology at the Faculty of Music). The articles covered a multitude of topics and methodologies, including a historical and archival study of the formation of the Third Program of Radio Belgrade and the role it played in the promotion and expansion of avant-garde music in the 1960s and 1970s (Medić), analysis of Vladan Radovanović’s radiophonic work *Small Eternal Lake* [*Malo večno*

²⁸ This conference was supposed to take place in Moscow, Russia in 2020, but it was subsequently held online, 20–25 September 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

²⁹ This conference was supposed to take place in the fall of 2020 but was subsequently held online on 8–9 April 2021.

jezero] (1984) (Emmery), an overview of Radovanović's manifold trajectories in his monomedia and polymedia projects, focusing on his approach to music in his "art synthesis" works (Milin), experimentation with the magnetic field and technologies in Jasna Veličković's music (Ilić), the effect and influence by John Cage on Opus 4 composers – Milimir Drašković, Miodrag Lazarov Pashu, Miroslav Savić, and Vladimir Tošić – and in their approach to musical minimalism, Fluxus, performance and conceptual art, and the use of expanded media (Miladinović Prica), examination of Serbian late twentieth-century neo-avant-garde through the lens of minimalist music by Savić and Tošić (Masnikosa), the disintegration of avant-garde music in the twenty-first century through the analysis of works by Marko Nikodijević and Petar Ozgijan (Veselinović-Hofman), the influence of the "Polish School" of composers and J. S. Bach on Rajko Maksimović in his *The Gospel According to St. John* (Stojanović-Novičić), the use of "archaic" Byzantine modes in Ljubica Marić's music in creating a new avant-garde aesthetic in Serbian music (Komatović), and the changing modernist aesthetic in Serbian music through the lens of Ivana Stefanović's three string quartets (Teparić).³⁰

This first collaboration for an edited volume with colleagues from Serbia was a learning experience on both sides. Unlike experienced veteran researchers, for some less-experienced junior and mid-career scholars, this was their first exposure to writing for a large international stage and meeting the high demands of the Anglo-American peer-review process. Although my work in this context was extensive and demanding, accompanied by unforeseen circumstances that I had to overcome, the final product was a success – albeit the result of a tremendously laborious process – with the issue earning a nomination for a publication award. In May 2022, together with colleagues from Belgrade, we organized a promotion of the project with a spectacular concert held at the Great Hall of the Faculty of Music.³¹

Based on my previous experience working with Ivana Medić – her high standard of scholarship, professionalism, and knowledge of the English language – I invited her to join me in editing my second project, *Serbian*

³⁰ See *Contemporary Music Review* 2021.

³¹ The event, a collaboration between Faculty of Music and Emory, and financed by Emory University and *Contemporary Music Review*, took place on 30 May 2022. Ivan Brkljačić, Vice-Dean for Education, gave an introductory note, and Emmery, Ilić, Medić, Miladinović Prica, and Veličković presented the publication. A concert featured the works by Tošić (performed by Vladimir Cvijić and Ljiljana Vukelja), Marić (Vladimir Gligorić and Aneta Ilić), Stefanović (Nemanja Stanković), Radovanović (video projection), Srđan Hofman (Neda Hofman-Sretenović and Srđan Sretenović), Savić (Nada Kolundžija and Savić), and Veličković (performed by the composer on the Velikon).

Musical Identity, and published as a themed issue of *CMR* in 2022.³² While the issue initially aimed to publish articles presented at the “Music and Art in the Shaping of the European Cultural Identity” conference, the invitation was extended to fifteen presenters (not counting myself), with ultimately only three of them contributing their studies for this volume. Because themed *CMR* issues require a minimum of six articles, Medić and I solicited several other studies by scholars we knew would adhere to high levels of scholarship, standards, and professionalism, and whose work would complement the topic and our aim to present the complexity of musical identities in Serbian art music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This issue featured ten articles that cover the topics of sacred music by Stevan Mokranjac and Marko Tajčević (by the late Ivan Moody), Byzantium as a metaphor for identity in Serbian music (Milin), gender representation in vocal music (Verica Grmuša), the influence of the Polish School on Raičković’s *Tri Haiku* (Iwona Lindstedt), musical homages in the works of Vlastimir Trajković (Jelena Janković-Beguš), the impact of the Different New Music Festivals held at the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade from 1984–1986 (Miladinović Prica), the history of Serbian music theory (Ilić), Serbian composers in the diaspora (Medić), and the reception of Serbian émigré composers living and working in the US, focusing on Nataša Bogojević, Milica Paranosić, and Aleksandra Vrebalov (Emmery).

This volume featured many outstanding studies that interrogate the concept and complexities of national musical identities, offer insight into the interpretation of Serbian music, and present a diverse musical landscape of Serbian music in a comprehensible manner. Further, my Fulbright Scholar residency at the Faculty of Music in 2023 coincided with the publication of this issue, which allowed me to organize yet another successful promotional event with a concert with colleagues from Belgrade and Novi Sad, and with many composers programmed in the concert in attendance.³³

In 2024, my collaboration with colleagues from Serbia (albeit, predominantly from the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts) resulted in other

³² See *Contemporary Music Review* 2022.

³³ The event took place on 18 May 2023 in the Great Hall at FMU and financed by Emory University and *Contemporary Music Review*. Dean Brkljačić reprised his role in giving an introductory note, while Ilić, Medić, Miladinović Prica, and Popović Mladenović joined me in presenting the project. A concert featured works by Bogojević (performed by Vladimir Milošević), Đuro Živković (Natalija Mladenović), Ognjen Bogdanović (Nemanja Stanković and Milošević), Miloš Raičković (Kolundžija and Mladenović), Aleksandar Damjanović (Kolundžija), Paranosić (video projection), Vrebalov (Milošević), Veličković (Kolundžija), and Nikodijević (Robert Lakatoš, Una Stanić, Jožef Bisak, and Stanković). Bogdanović, Nikodijević, Veličković, and Živković were in attendance.

high-impact and internationally visible projects. I co-organized “The Ninth International Conference of Music and Minimalism: Minimalist Intersections” with Medić, hosted by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 29 May – 1 June.³⁴ Following the conference, Medić and Pwyll ap Siôn published the conference proceedings,³⁵ and I invited ap Siôn to co-edit a special issue of *CMR* on *Minimalist Music in Eastern Europe*. This issue features sixteen articles by authors from across Europe and the US, including three contributions from Serbia (Ilić, who wrote about operas by Irena Popović and Aleksandra Vrebalov; Medić, focusing on *Hilandar Bells* by Vuk Kulenović; and Miladinović Prica, with her study on the Ensemble for Different New Music, Miloš Raičković, and Katarina Miljković).³⁶

Peer review of *CMR* issues, while still adhering to high academic standards, may be approached as a review of edited volume books: rather than soliciting two reviewers for each article, editors may choose to send the entire themed collection to the same two reviewers. Although in these situations reports often tend to be shorter, the method is necessary, especially when soliciting experts on niche topics and less familiar musics. This is the approach I took with my volumes on Serbian music because, with a combined total of twenty-two articles, it would have been quite difficult to find over forty (available) expert reviewers on the topics. Because the third issue was more geographically spread to encompass minimalist music in the Balkan region, the Visegrád group, and the USSR and the Baltic States, I solicited two individual reviewers for each article.

Taylor & Francis does not provide the data on the acceptance rate of *CMR* articles, although the rate for special issue articles is significantly higher, and issues with fewer than ten articles are not included in their data.³⁷ However, the process of submission and evaluation of themed issues is so different from evaluating individual articles for *MTS* that comparing the two methods would be of little value. Potential guest editors approach *CMR* editors with a detailed proposal for a themed issue that includes the rationale for the issue, how it adds, critiques, or departs from current studies on a topic, abstracts for each article within the issue, biographies of the guest editor(s) and all contributors, and a detailed proposed timeline from start (proposal) to finish (publication).

³⁴ As part of the conference, Miladinović Prica and I organized and curated an exhibition, “The Origins of Yugoslav Musical Minimalism,” displayed at the Cultural Center Parobrod in Belgrade, 25 May – 3 June 2024, co-authored a book of the same title, and an article (Emmery and Miladinović Prica [2024a; 2024b]).

³⁵ ap Siôn and Medić (2024).

³⁶ See *Contemporary Music Review* 2024.

³⁷ See Taylor & Francis Author Services n.d.

Editors often reach out to scholars with publishing and editorial experience and whose research topics are pertinent to the aims and scope of the journal, or can themselves propose a themed issue (as I did on several occasions). (This approach requires that Editors of *CMR* are active scholars in the field who attend national and international conferences and follow a wide range of research within music studies.) Each proposal for a themed issue is rigorously evaluated by the *CMR* team of editors and is either accepted (with some minor revisions), recommended R&R (that may include requesting certain articles be removed from the collection or adding additional topics and contributors), or entirely rejected. Once a proposal has been accepted, it does not mean that articles have been accepted for publication; each article must undergo a rigorous peer review process by external reviewers. A *CMR* Editor is assigned a mentoring role to guide the guest editors through the peer review, revision, and copyediting processes. After a guest editor has completed their editorial tasks on accepted articles, a *CMR* Editor thoroughly copyedits each article within a collection assigned to them and prepares them for production and publication.

CONCLUSION

I exercise my role as editor of two notable journals – *Music Theory Spectrum*, a flagship journal of the field of music theory, and *Contemporary Music Review*, one of the leading journals in music studies that fosters diversity and inclusivity in the musics, methodologies, and approaches – with utmost professionalism, care, and respect. As Editor-in-Chief of *MTS*, my primary goal is to uphold the highest standard of rigor in scholarship in the field of music theory while striving to capture the essence of the founders' goals of presenting the broad and varied range of topics and specializations within the field, and adhering to the highest standards of ethics and integrity in all my editorial decisions. Serving as Editor of *CMR* allows me to create international collaborative projects on themes of interest that decenter musicological discourse on post-socialist Europe.

Considering that on average it takes about two years for an article to be published after it has been submitted (this timeframe takes into account the peer-review process, revisions, editing, copyediting, typesetting, and proof-reading) and that my *CMR* issues on Serbian and Eastern European music are new – the first one was published three years ago the most recent last month, the metrics for citations still do not exist. However, the publication of these issues presented scholarship from marginalized musical cultures to a large and international audience. The issue on Serbian Musical Avant-Gardes has thus far garnered 2,755 downloads and views, mostly from the US, Serbia, the

UK, and China (although also reaching Australia, Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Russia, Poland, and Sweden), and nearly twenty citations, which is a remarkable feat for a three-year issue.³⁸ The issue on Serbian Musical Identity boasts nearly 3,600 views (once again predominantly from Serbia, the US, the UK, and China, but also reaching Kuwait and Portugal, among other countries listed above).³⁹ The data on *Minimalist Music in Eastern Europe* is quite preliminary since the issue was published just a month ago, but I anticipate that including Serbian musical practices within broader international trends will result in higher visibility and readership of this issue. Even when considering preliminary data, these projects indicate that these international collaborations have fostered new communities of scholars that bridge geographies, research cultures, and academic worlds and make a large step toward decolonizing Eastern European music studies from the power of Anglo-American scholarship.

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³⁸ Taylor & Francis provides the metrics for each article.

³⁹ This number of views does not include the article that was retracted.

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ЛАУРА ЕМЕРИ

СТРОГОСТ АКАДЕМСКОГ ИЗДАВАШТВА И КОЛАБОРАТИВНИ ПРОЈЕКТИ:
ПЕРСПЕКТИВА УРЕДНИКА ЧАСОПИСА *MUSIC THEORY SPECTRUM* И
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Music Theory Spectrum, основан 1977. године, представља званичан часопис Друштва за музичку теорију [Society for Music Theory] и водећу публикацију у области музичке теорије. Часопис објављује строге и критички усмерене студије из широког спектра тема у области музичке теорије и анализе, укључујући и интердисциплинарне радове који истражују пресеке музичке теорије са сродним областима као што су етно-музикологија, историјска музикологија, математика, филозофија, психологија и извођаштво. Главном уреднику часописа *Music Theory Spectrum* Друштво за музичку теорију поверава одговорност да обезбеди највиши ниво ригорозности и изврности критичког истраживања у области, уз доследно поштовање највиших етичких стандарда и принципа интегритета у свим уредничким одлукама. У том смислу, главни уредник одређује мисију и оквир деловања часописа, као и правац развоја саме дисциплине. *Contemporary Music Review* једна је од водећих публикација усмерених на критичко проучавање и разматрање савремене музике у глобалном контексту, ослањајући се на разноврсне методолошке приступе. Часопис функционише као форум за музичаре и музикологе који истражују различите аспекте савремене музике, укључујући извођаштво, композицију, естетику, технологију и односе с другим дисциплинама. *Contemporary Music Review* објављује искључиво тематске бројеве, што нужно подразумева рад на колаборативним пројектима. У овом рефлексивном чланку ауторка износи аутоетнографску процену ригорозности академског издаваштва из перспективе главног уредника часописа *Music Theory Spectrum*, као и анализу изазова и резултата колаборативних пројеката сагледаних кроз призму уредника часописа *Contemporary Music Review* – позиција које тренутно обавља.