

"Handbuch Musikvermittlung. Studium, Lehre, Berufspraxis", edited by Axel Petri-Preis and Johannes Voit.

Review

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The recently published *Handbuch Musikvermittlung* [Handbook of Music Mediation] has not only met expectations, it has far exceeded them! The editors, Axel Petri-Preis and Johannes Voit, in collaboration with their 57 co-authors from the music mediation community and related disciplines, have achieved the commendable feat of presenting the multifaceted dimensions, nuances, and intricacies of music mediation in an engaging and accessible manner, while upholding the highest standards of academic publishing, including an open peer review process. This handbook addresses a significant gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive and well-founded resource for practitioners of music mediation, educators, students, and researchers. It represents a foundational work that meets the long-felt need for in-depth basic research and contributes to establishing music mediation as an independent discipline, despite its interdisciplinary links and overlaps with other subjects. The focus on Austria, Germany, South Tyrol, Switzerland and Luxembourg is justified not only by the common terminology – in the English-speaking countries terms such as ‘music education’ or ‘outreach’ are often used – but above all by the specific practice of music mediation that seems to be characteristic of this area.

The objective of establishing a central repository for university teaching and a foundation for discourse between educators, researchers, students, and practitioners is reflected in the structure of the book. The editors collaborated closely with members of

the Forum Musikvermittlung¹ to develop this architecture. The handbook is supported by a broad professional community and reflects music mediation in all its facets, as evidenced by the diversity of perspectives incorporated into the content. These facets include music mediation as an artistic-educational practice, as an emerging field of research, as an interdisciplinary interface, and as a multi-layered, sometimes controversial field of discourse. The editors' participatory approach to the handbook as a joint project of the music mediation community exemplifies a fundamental attitude inherent to music mediation: only through the incorporation of diverse perspectives, including those that may be critical, can a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of music mediation be achieved.

A particularly noteworthy aspect to highlight is the handbook's consistent focus on the power-critical perspective, which runs like a red thread through its entirety. This focus sheds light on existing power structures and relationships, particularly within institutional contexts, and encourages critical reflection among readers. By engaging with these critical perspectives, the handbook not only addresses theoretical concepts but also invites practitioners to confront the realities of power dynamics in their work.

The book is structured into four principal sections. The initial section provides a thorough introduction to the theoretical and historical foundations that are essential for a comprehensive understanding. In addition to a detailed examination of definitional and terminological aspects, the book presents a variety of lines of argument and approaches. The attempt to answer the fundamental question 'What is music mediation?' makes it clear from the first pages of the handbook that a comprehensive presentation of the field – or rather, of the field with all its ramifications for and overlaps with neighbouring and related areas – is necessary in order to find answers, and the following 400 pages convincingly deliver this.

Another section highlights the potential of music mediation as an object of reflection and research. In essays by Sarah Chaker, Constanze Wimmer and Hendrikje Mautner-Obst, the transformative and reflexive potential of music mediation is elaborated. The texts show how music mediation – from the inside out – has not only changed the concert business, but has also set the entire cultural sector in motion, and is not afraid to take a critical stance and to demand the same from actors and institutions in the cultural context. The authors' texts show how, starting from a practice that was originally oriented towards action, processes of reflection and transformation have developed that have now also found their way into academic research.

Voits' historical overview of music mediation provides insights into various lines of development and analyses the various origins of music mediation. This historical perspective enables a deeper understanding of how music mediation was able to develop on the basis of a particular understanding of concerts and culture. The country-specific contributions from Austria, Switzerland, South Tyrol and Luxembourg are particularly illuminating, providing valuable insights into the respective local situations and thus impressively rounding off the overall picture of music mediation in this specific area.

¹ forum-musikvermittlung.eu (accessed October 6, 2024).

The initial section of the handbook is devoted to an exposition of the fundamental principles of music mediation, after which the subsequent section becomes increasingly detailed. The second part is dedicated to the actors and institutions involved in music mediation. It begins with an examination of the role of music mediators, then turns to a discussion of selected institutions where practitioners of music mediation are employed, and finally considers the target groups, whom the handbook refers to as ‘dialogue groups’. In this context, the editors and their co-authors wish to emphasise their belief that the term ‘dialogue groups’ is particularly apt, as it reflects the fundamental importance of music-related encounters and exchange in the practice of music mediation. Dialogue at eye level!

Petri-Preis initiates the investigation by posing the question of who is active in music mediation, that is, who these individuals are who situate themselves within this field, what professional backgrounds they bring with them, and what socio-demographic milieus they can be assigned to. His description of the situation leads the reader to the next chapter, in which Barbara Stiller provides an overview of the training and further education opportunities in the university context in German-speaking countries. She also points to the cross-regional exchange within this language area, which is enriching this young academic discipline and contributing to its further development. In her essay, Nina Stoffers elucidates the necessity for music mediators to engage with critical perspectives on power in the context of their actions and to elucidate power relations within institutional frameworks. This is not merely for the sake of visibility, but primarily to effect change in existing power relations. This is another illustration of the central theme, and demonstrates the relevance of a discourse that is critical of power, as well as the necessity for a critical and self-critical approach on the part of these practitioners.

The following section presents a comprehensive overview of thirteen institutional facilities that regularly engage in music mediation activities. This section presents a selection of significant stages for music mediation, encompassing not only the conventional institutions, but also illuminating the contributions of less prominent actors in this field. In addition to the conventional establishments such as concert halls, orchestras, and opera houses, this section also features less prominent institutions, including musicological institutes, archives, and foundations, which are identified as sites where music mediation is regularly conducted. The description of these diverse fields of practice illustrates the numerous ramifications and intersections of music mediation with other cultural institutions, an aspect that Voit also addresses in his introductory chapter to this section.

In the introduction, the two editors highlight that the third main section forms the ‘heart’ of the handbook. This statement arouses curiosity and raises expectations. What can readers expect? The section is entitled ‘Fields of Tension and Discourse’, and even a cursory glance at the chapter headings reveals that key and, in some cases, fundamental issues are indeed addressed here. While the initial two sections, in addition to the

fourth part of the book, which will be discussed below, concentrate on historical developments, participants, institutions and practices of music mediation – as is to be expected from a handbook – the third section addresses subjects that engender areas of contention and encompass social, cultural, aesthetic, pedagogical, ethical and spatial dimensions. Central areas of tension that characterise the field of music mediation and its practices are addressed. It becomes apparent that music mediation action often cannot be clearly located, but rather operates precisely in the areas of tension, whereby it is characterised by an ability to ‘both-and’. Those engaged in music mediation are able to reflect on these tensions and engage with a variety of discourses. For instance, Wimmer addresses the question of the guiding orientation of music education, namely whether it should be pedagogical, artistic, or a combination of both. In addition, Christoph Stange elucidates the purported dichotomy between understanding and experience. Johanna Ludwig elucidates considerations of sustainability in the context of one-off music mediation events. Petri-Preis examines the extent to which social responsibility in the context of music mediation is compatible with the idea of audience development. These and other polarities are discussed in the third section, providing readers not only with a broad spectrum of areas of tension, but also with critical and reflective ways of dealing with them.

Highlighting these areas of tension – and the questions that are discussed in this third section are core questions – is of central importance in order to develop a deeper understanding of this practice and its embedding in cultural and social contexts. The individual essays illustrate different, sometimes controversial perspectives and reveal a picture of music mediation with all its contours and edges. However, the essays also make it clear that areas of tension do not necessarily have to be resolved – sometimes this is even almost impossible – but that their existence harbours a special power and potential that can be made fruitful for the practice of music mediation. The contributions in this section make it clear that it is not always a question of overcoming polarities, but rather of developing a reflective approach to them – this is precisely what characterises music mediation and is reflected in the concept of this third major chapter.

The fourth section is dedicated to the overlaps with related fields of practice. In his introductory essay, Petri-Preis emphasises that this section is not primarily concerned with delineating clear boundaries between music mediation and other disciplines, but rather with identifying commonalities and highlighting the potential that lies within the existing differences. This underscores a key feature of music mediation: its focus on networking with other fields of practice. At the same time, it becomes evident that while the subject has established itself as an independent discipline, it also functions as an interdisciplinary field, with its boundaries often fluid and permeable. This is partly due to the fact that practitioners frequently engage in multiple disciplines. Petri-Preis addresses these interconnections not only on a content level, but also structurally and spatially.

In the following chapters, some expected overlaps with related fields of practice are explored, including community music, music education in schools or cultural educa-

tion. Of particular interest, however, is Michael Wimmer's contribution, which examines the presumed intersections with sociocultural factors. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of significant fault lines, which the author highlights in a critical manner. Wimmer presents a critical portrayal of music mediation, depicting it as a practice frequently constrained by the influence of large cultural institutions that demonstrate minimal commitment to reforming their established structures and traditional orientations. So far, no real overlap between music mediation and the sociocultural understanding described by Wimmer is evident, raising the question of how this highly pointed and intriguing contribution has 'slipped' into this section? The answer can be found in Wimmer's conclusion, in which he explains – in the subjunctive – why both areas would do well to converge, to work together and to develop intersections in the interest of both socioculture and music mediation. Particularly noteworthy – and deserving of emphasis – is the fact that such a critical essay finds a place in this section. Wimmer names blind spots, addresses the challenges facing music mediation in no uncertain terms, and discusses possible intersections that are currently still missing but are perfectly feasible. The fact that a central and, for a young discipline, essential publication also offers space for such (self-)critical perspectives should not go unmentioned.

The handbook concludes with a presentation of selected practices in music mediation, presented as a living kaleidoscope. In the introduction, the editors emphasise that this selection is inevitably fragmentary. Nevertheless, a brief glance at the chapter headings already provides an impression of the variety, transdisciplinarity and diversity of music mediation formats. The section covers an impressive range of fields of practice, demonstrating the versatility and interconnectedness of music mediation in different social and cultural contexts. From concerts in established cultural institutions to digital formats and interreligious projects, to programmes for people with dementia – to name just a few examples – it becomes clear how multifaceted and inclusive music mediation can be and what central role it plays in fostering a democratic and participatory understanding of culture. Given the dynamic changes in our society, it is particularly exciting to observe how the field of music mediation will continue to evolve and which new forms of practice may enrich the spectrum in the future. It remains to be seen what creative approaches music mediation will bring forth in the years to come!

Above all, a handbook should convince through a comprehensive and systematic presentation of its subject area. It must be academically sound and take into account current developments as well as established principles, in order to meet the requirements of a reference work. In doing so, it should combine theoretical knowledge with practical references, in order to offer the readership not only orientation but also concrete perspectives for action. The present Handbook of Music Mediation meets these requirements to a high degree. With this publication, the editors have created a real milestone. With its structured organisation and depth of content, which also does not neglect critical perspectives, it represents a valuable resource and basis for practice, for teaching and for scientific debate and will prove to be indispensable reading for all

those working in the field and those who want to become involved. However, the handbook also invites you to simply immerse yourself in the individual chapters...

Highly recommended!

Author Biography

Judith McGregor studied instrumental pedagogy (viola) at the mdw Vienna and also completed the master's programme in music mediation at the ABPU Linz. She works as a university assistant in the field of instrumental and vocal pedagogy at the mdw and is doing her doctorate on the topic of 'music mediation in the context of instrumental pedagogy'. Her research interest is particularly in the attitude and action orientation of pedagogues who work in both instrumental pedagogy and music mediation.