

Professor Nicola Dibben, The University of Sheffield (UK)

Nicola Dibben is Professor in Music, and Director of the Humanities Research Institute, at the University of Sheffield, UK. She is former editor of the journals *Empirical Musicology Review*, and *Popular Music*, is the author of *Björk* (2009) and co-authored *Music and Mind in Everyday Life* (2010) and has over 40 publications in psychology of music and popular music studies - interests she attributes to encountering empirical methods while an undergraduate, and to a childhood infatuation with British TV chart show *Top of the Pops*. Her commercial and applied collaborations include investigating effects of music on driving, on the work of surgical teams in theatre, and working with Björk on the artist's multi-media app album, *Biophilia* (2011). She's currently completing a book on *Biophilia*, which explores music in new media, and is involved in projects concerned with understanding and articulating the value of arts and humanities research to the challenges of contemporary life.

Lecture: *Cross-modal influences on music perception*

Thursday 24.11 at 12.45

Auditorium 128, Bjørn Christiansens Hus

Keywords: music perception, cross modality, subjectivity/subject position, new media, digitalisation

Abstract: It is well established that music is a multimodal phenomena: like all aspects of our environment, music is perceived using all our sense modalities, whether that be seeing performers move while we hear them play, or watching visuals on screen as we listen to the film soundtrack. In this sense music is *in multimedia*. However, we can also think of music *as multimedia*; listening to music is not just an auditory phenomena, but one in which musical sounds are experienced in terms of the concepts and phenomena of other sense modalities. So why and how do we experience music in this way, and what are its consequences?

In this presentation I draw on theories of multimodality and empirical studies of music perception to show how other sensory modes are involved in the perceptual character of diverse musical experiences. I present examples illustrative of three perspectives: composer/producer, dancer, and listener. Using the example of Björk's *Biophilia* app album I analyse the way in which cross-domain and crossmodal correspondences shaped the composition and design of the album, and how, in this case, these expressed beliefs about the relationship between music and the natural world. This example also highlights the potential of new (digital) media for multimodal experience. A second example examines the dancers' perspective by investigating the qualitative and psychological experience of electronic dance music (EDM), revealing how embodied experience of EDM is experienced in terms of self-perceived movement and vigour even when the listener is stationary and outside the club setting. My third example explores the extent to which cross-domain correspondences underlie the sense of subjectivity/subject position in music listening, and ultimately a sense of becoming, or identifying with a musical performance. I argue that an embodied and multimodal approach to understanding musical experience gets us closer to understanding the experiential qualities of music.

Questions addressed by the lecture:

To what extent is our experience of music dependent on cross-domain correspondences within music, and between auditory perception and other sensory modes?

How do cross-domain correspondences manifest in music composition, dancing and listening?

What is the potential for new media musical objects (e.g. music apps) to exploit crossmodal correspondences, and to what extent does this break with or continue previous multimodal musical practices?

Recommended reading:

Dibben, N. (2013). Visualizing the app album with Björk's Biophilia. In Vernallis, C., Herzog, A. & Richardson, J. (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*, (pp.682-704). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Spence, C. (2011). Crossmodal correspondences: A tutorial review. *Attention, Perception & Psychophysics*, 73, 971-995.