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Keynote lecture: *Music's uses and powers in social life*

Thursday 09.06 at 09.00 Venue: Bergen University College, room TBA

Keywords: Emergence, affordance, mesostructure, activity, furnishing

Abstract: The focus on music's social uses and powers has illuminated music as a medium of social ordering. The study of music has moved beyond text and into activity. New ontologies of music down play the idea of the musical object or music 'itself' and emphasize instead the flexibility, emergence, affordance, process and contingency of what we refer to as 'music'. They also point to a perspective that leaves behind certain conventional sociological dichotomies such as the macro-micro division, or the idea of culture understood as if it were a noun.

In this talk I describe how the recent focus on 'doing things with music' is now poised to prompt new thinking about social structure, culture, and social change, and new methods for investigating music in social life. That project emphasizes aesthetic ecologies of action and ecologically valid accounts of how music works and what it does. It requires new notions of what music is and isn't. Its investigative pace is 'slow', with an emphasis on practices of musical engagement in real time and space. It asks questions such as: (a) how can we understand music as part of the furnishing of social worlds, (b) how are musical 'furnishings' connected to meanings, things, people, and activities, (c) how much of social life is achieved without language, and (d) how is music's role in constituting what we recognize as human social being similar and different from the role played by other cultural media?

Key questions addressed by the lecture:

What is social ecology and how can music studies benefit from adopting an ecological perspective?

In what ways have recent music studies contributed to our understanding of human social and physical conditions?

What kinds of methods are useful for studying music-as-process and what kinds of analytical concepts are available for tracking what people do with music and what music does with people?

Recommended reading:

Tia DeNora. 2013. *Music Asylums: Wellbeing Through Music in Everyday Life*.
Farnham: Ashgate

Tia DeNora. 2014. *Making Sense of Reality: Culture and Perception in Everyday Life*.
London: Sage.

Tia DeNora and Gary Ansdell. 2014. What Can't Music Do? *Psychology of Wellbeing*. 4, 23:
<http://www.psywb.com/content/pdf/s13612-014-0023-6.pdf>