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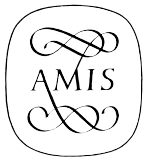

Organology and Other Organology

Since this JOURNAL first appeared in 1975, "organology" has appeared in one article title and "organological" in one title. This rarity of the term's use suggests that members of the American Musical Instrument Society (AMIS) are not obsessed with disciplinary boundaries or orthodoxy. Remarkably, the word organology was removed in March 1972 from an earlier statement of purpose drafted by AMIS founders. According to an account of the society's early years, the term, as used by Nicholas Bessaraboff in a scientific or engineering sense in 1941, might have seemed at odds with a broader cultural view of musical instruments favored by some founding members.[1] Another likely reason for the term's lack of currency is its slight awkwardness, seeming narrowly suggestive of certain keyboard instruments.

Are the outlooks of AMIS members in need of broadening? It's not an unfair question, though seldom voiced within this dispassionate coalition. As revised in 1978, bylaws describe the society's purpose: "to promote the knowledge of all aspects of musical instruments, particularly pertaining to the collecting, history, performance on, use, construction, and restoration of musical instruments of all ages and all peoples." Forty years later, this statement still seems fair-minded and outward-looking. In a similar spirit of receptiveness, this issue of *JAMIS* includes a collection of essays examining our field's preoccupations and assumptions. The AMIS 2017 conference (held jointly with Galpin Society and hosted by Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments) included a panel discussion on "Organology and the Others: Cross-disciplinary Methods Applied to the Study of Musical Instruments." Five essays were circulated in advance, and then discussed by the five authors. These original five essays, lightly revised, are reprinted here, followed by responses from two professed representatives of "traditional organology." Exactly what that term denotes is grist for much of the discussion.

From a socio-political outset, "other" (as adjective, noun, and verb) has taken root in cultural theory, displacing the twentieth-century term "alternative," which now seems to be outmoded. ("Alterity," however, is a

1. See Carolyn Bryant, " 'In the Beginning: The Early Days of the American Musical Instrument Society," *JAMIS* 33 (2007): 162–239, at 178–79.

term often heard in ethnomusicological circles.) As a tool used to interrogate such traditional academic disciplines as literature, visual arts, and musical cultures, "other" provides themes for books and conferences. Academic thinkers frequently argue for "other" versions of traditional disciplines, which may or may not attract broad acceptance.

From this exchange of views, some new insights of lasting value will emerge, we dare to hope. Among the mental furniture of well-read traditional musicians is the wave theory of sound, developed in the eighteenth century by Bernoulli and d'Alembert. Wave theory was elaborated in the nineteenth century by James Clerk Maxwell into an explanation of electromagnetic radiation. In the twentieth century, wave theory was a cornerstone of quantum mechanics, as elaborated by Erwin Schrödinger. Much of the electronic technology that surrounds and sustains our twenty-first century existence depends directly on this ongoing intellectual ferment. Will these seven essays give rise to insights of similar breadth and consequence? That thinking is wishful, no doubt. But the views captured here, accompanied by a selective bibliography, can perhaps be a reference point for future debate about organology as a discipline.

For the record, words that have occurred most frequently in *JAMIS* article titles over the decades are: checklist, collection, early, history/historical, instrument, maker, and music/musical. Perhaps the editor of *JAMIS* in 2061 will report on whether the society's preoccupations have continued or evolved during the society's next forty-three years.

THE EDITOR