

MAiA | Music & Arts
in Action

Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of *Music and Arts in Action* (MAiA). We are delighted by the enthusiastic reception that greeted the inaugural issue in Summer 2008. The rapid increase in readership over the past six months demonstrates the widespread interest not only in the journal itself, but also in the empirical exploration of artistic engagement in its many forms. Moreover, the mission we set for MAiA at that time, “to provide a forum for considering the arts and aesthetic media as active ingredients in social life,” has been taken up by scholars in a variety of fields. We have received a wide range of interesting submissions and look forward to publishing these in future issues. (The titles of forthcoming articles are now listed on a new page of [the MAiA website](#)).

The research presented in this, the Winter 2008/2009 issue, is part of an ongoing exchange of ideas from many different disciplines and actors which we at MAiA are proud to facilitate. The focus on music and the arts in distinct situations of action is of chief importance to MAiA. In this issue, therefore, we are pleased to include two articles written by arts practitioners who provide unique and reflective insights into the performing arts, a trend we hope will continue in the future.

The articles in this issue can be seen to examine, from different angles, the issue of how we are ‘taught how to behave’ through and around music and the arts. In many ways, art forms discipline (and expect) both artists and audiences to follow certain unwritten rules. The invisibility of these ‘tacit rules of engagement’ makes them difficult to challenge, and raises important questions about social and cultural inclusion. As scholars of the arts, we play an important role in making these rules visible, and thus open to negotiation. As the authors in this issue demonstrate, discourses about artistic rules, codes, or conventions take place not only in discussions between art participants and/or audiences, but actually *through* engagement with the artistic event itself. By exposing the backstage ‘work’ that supports a successful performance event, these articles reveal the processes by which art forms are used to discipline performers and audiences alike, and in the process, reveal how unexpected orientations to artistic performance can create opportunities for transformative meaning-making.

Helene Lawson draws on her ethnographic work as a participant in tap dancing lessons to discuss the role of art in the life of people who do not consider themselves to be artists. In exploring the triumphs and hardships people go through on a daily basis in less than glamorous settings, Lawson reveals that dancing brings immense joy to these amateur dancers in ways that challenge established norms in the tap world. This performance theme is continued by Stephen Tipton Miles, who leads a frank, honest and rigorously self-reflexive account of the work by his performance group, *New Music New College*, to challenge the domination of the traditional musical performance setting. In doing so, Miles sets the stage for an understanding of contemporary musical performance as a dynamic space for two-

way communicative action between performers and audiences. Performance is also the starting point for John Samuel Burdick's article on identity and racial thought in São Paulo's black gospel scene. Here, Burdick examines the role played by discourses and ideology in mobilising collective action, and, in doing so, demonstrates that the everyday life of musical scenes (e.g., rehearsals and informal interaction) provide cognitive tools in building group identity.

Given this issue's focus on performance, we are tremendously excited that both *Why Dance? The Motivations of an Unlikely Group of Dancers* and *Agency and Domination in Communicative Performance* take advantage of MAiA's online format and integrate video documentation in the text of the article.

We very much hope that the topics, ideas, and questions presented in this issue encourage others to continue the discussion, both in MAiA and elsewhere. This year, MAiA is also beginning a series of themed issues, which will appear annually. The first two special issues will examine the arts in conflict transformation and peace building, and the arts and personal health practices. We hope you will find these exchanges interesting, and join in by commenting on articles or submitting your own material.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM, MUSIC AND ARTS IN ACTION

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